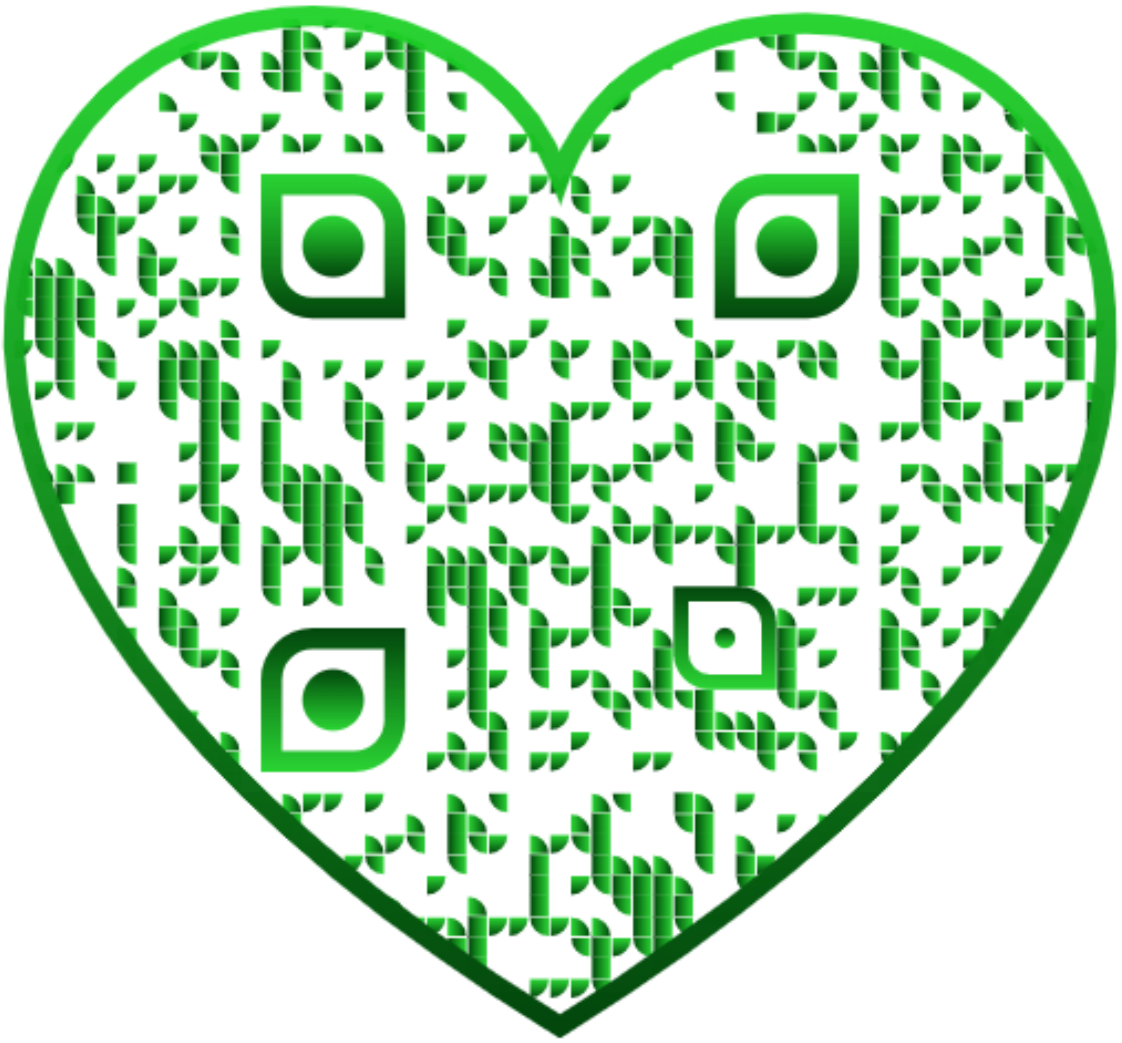
THE UNOFFICIAL ILLUSTRATED HISTORY

UPDATED EDITION

MARTIN POPOFF



RUSH

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UPDATED EDITION

MARTIN POPOFF

with

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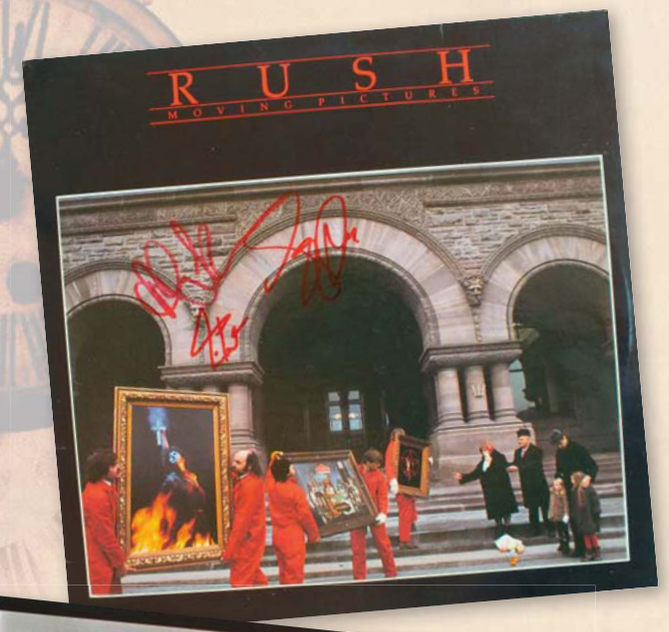
INTRODUCTION



As I scribble this, Rush has now languidly celebrated its 2012 studio album, *Clockwork Angels*, on live tour as—pointedly—its heaviest, grooviest, most red-lined record since *Moving Pictures*. The *Clockwork Angels* tour was followed by the artfully retrospective *R40* and all is right in the world of heavy yet well-meaning progressive rock as sculpted and divulged by three busy stagehands from Canada. But is this the end? The band's last date on the *R40* swing, in Los Angeles, had folks theorizing that, indeed, Rush has played its last show ever. It remains to be seen, as summer turns to fall, and Rush typically reflects.

And so, with some level of unease, we celebrate what many have called Canada's greatest export. I must say, it's so nice writing these rock biographies when you get to the end and it's a happy story, with wizened rock veterans not burnt out but using all that wisdom gained to knock out a barnstormer like *Clockwork Angels*, a concept album to boot, and one with a novel to go with it, lest Peart's inscrutable jottings aren't plot enough (they aren't).

Truth be told, after working for months on the Rush movie, *Beyond the Lighted Stage*, as well as having penned a previous Rush book, I didn't think I had the energy or curiosity left in me to dive into Rushworld again. But the beauty of this Voyageur Press concept (applied to previous lush tomes on Zeppelin, Queen, Aerosmith, AC/DC, and Iron Maiden, to name a few) won me over but good.

Forsooth, it is to the credit of Rush fans and their (our) completist and detail-obsessed nature that an abbreviated history, such as I've done here, is destined to dissatisfy. But look beyond that anchor contribution and this book in fact serves the superfan robustly. First, there's the contribution from our panel of distinguished rock critics who have been asked to pour their most intense creative energies into thinking and feeling out Rush's mesmerizing, mathematizing, baffling, and exasperating catalog—this is indeed a deep, intellectual read for the demanding fan and I know these writers have had a ball saying their piece, making peace, and offering a piece of their hearts and minds. Indeed, some of the most satisfying writing I've ever done has been my own contributions to Voyageur's Maiden, AC/DC, and Aerosmith books from this series. In fact, I envied being part of the review team so much for this one, I managed to weasel my way into being the dude to bisect, and further dissect fully, three of Rush's platters, two that matter, *Counterparts* and *Clockwork Angels*, and one that . . . doesn't? (*Presto*—ouch).

Rush rocks L.A. Was this their last show ever?
© Trevor Shaikin

Still, beyond the intense debate these full-pro, full-press reviews are bound to cause, the yummiest part of this book is the fact that it is surprisingly near on the first (well, for sure by far the best) book-bound pageant of Rush memorabilia ever presented, which is of course as expected, given the plush presentation of the other books in this series.

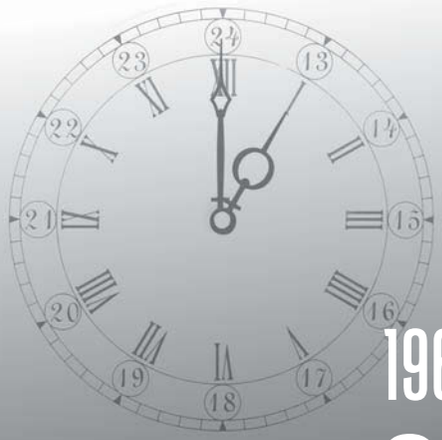
Anybody who knows me knows I love the ads, especially the early ones from my beloved days of elementary school subscribing to *Circus* (biking home at lunch wishing beyond all strivation and deprivation that the new issue was in the mailbox), as well as the big black-and-whites from the UK tabloids, which by osmosis and abstraction tell the story of Rush's close and respectful relationship with Jolly Ol' England. The passes, the ticket stubs, the 45 sleeves, the CD singles . . . it's all here, much from my own heaping collection but very much so because of the scholarship and cheerful toil thrown into the project by ultimate Rush collector (with requisite basement museum), Ray Wawrzyniak, a good bud from Buffalo. Even with a beautiful family and a teaching job, he's had more important things to do than to drop everything and cede to image requests from myself and our shared Voyageur helmsman Dennis Pernu.

Ray's contribution of images put this project over the top, toward, then past, what all of us Rush fans have been missing and yearning for all these years, a Rush museum, even if this one is in convenient book form and not somehow bricked an' mortared onto the back of Rush HQ down on Carlton.

Oh yeah, since you asked, my favorite Rush album is *Signals*, and that's 'cos I just love the creamy production, visualized perfectly by the front cover colors, plus the fact that 1982 was a fun yet lonely drum woodshedding year for me, second year of university in Nelson, BC, big Peart-mad drum set crammed in the attic of a buddy's house, learning "New World Man," "Subdivisions," all those buttery *Signals* songs . . . okay, on that note of nostalgia necessary in every Rush fan's life, read on, soak in that eye candy, and let the debates begin . . .

Martin Popoff
martinpopoff.com

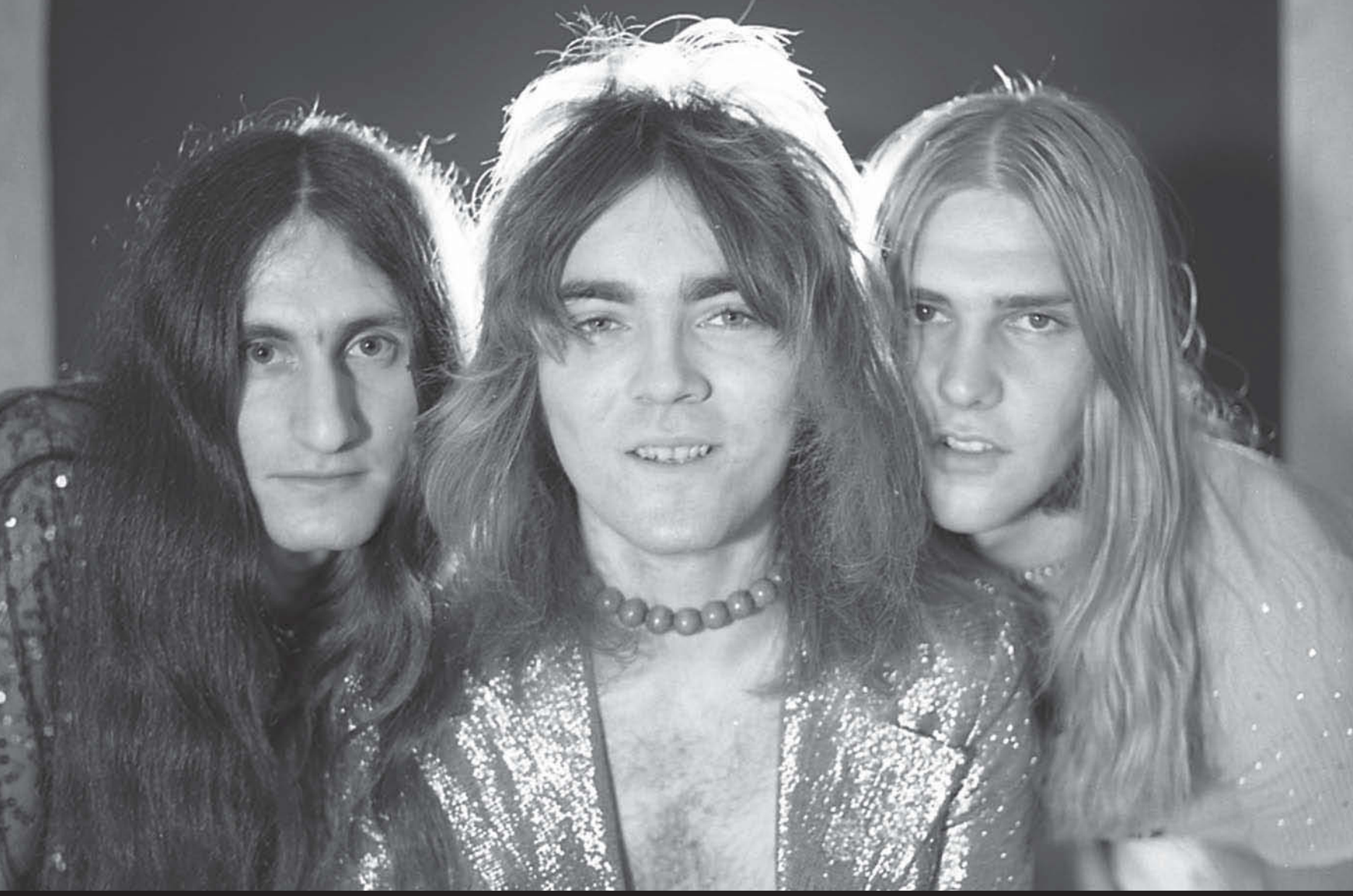
"Three friends from suburban Willowdale at the north end of Toronto get together in high school and drive their parents nuts with the noises they make down in the basement. After a while, they play a few gigs at the school and all their friends say they're far out. Then they get ambitious, and join the union. Soon, they're deep in debt to the instrument store."
—Richard Flohil, *Canadian Composer*, 1975



1964–1972
SUBDIVISIONS

IN MANY WAYS, it's a typical generation quake of a rock 'n' roll story, but roiling beneath, it's also the story of pursuing the Canadian dream, with its subtle differences against the American experience. The story of Rush begins with the foundation of solid parentage, of organization and practicality out of necessity, of the kind contours of Canada's immigrant mosaic allowing folks to rise up to and then through the middle class from a foundation of nothing.

Gary "Geddy Lee" Weinrib's parents, Morris and Manya (later known as Mary), arrived in Canada in 1948, having survived Nazi concentration camps—at the end, Dachau for Morris and Bergen-Belsen for Manya. The couple was one of two thousand married at Bergen-Belsen, after the war when it had become a displaced persons camp. The original plan was to settle in New York, but Canada romanced the couple, and they moved in with Manya's sister. Two years into renting on their own for the first time, a daughter, Suzie, was born. While in their first purchased home on Charles Street in Toronto, Gary was born on July 29, 1953. On to Downsview briefly



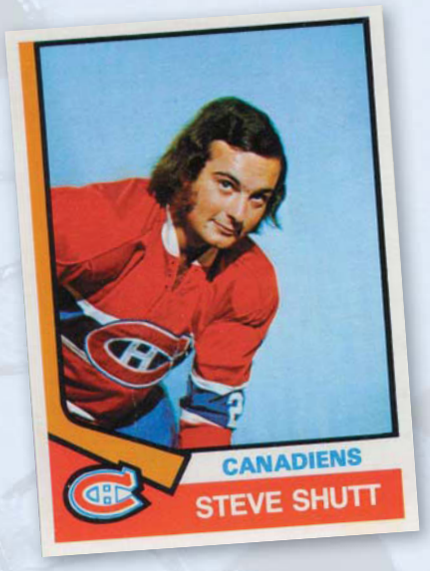
Early publicity photo shoot. © *Bruce Cole*

and the young family's second home, where younger brother Alan joined the fold, followed by a move to Willowdale, where Rush history blossoms.

With Geddy barely eleven in October 1964, his father died, succumbing to a body broken by the Holocaust, forcing the boy to become a man quickly, in fact, the man of the house. He worked with his devastated mother in the family's variety store clear across the north of the city, commuting through what were then muddy streets and farmland to undeveloped Newmarket. Working tirelessly that busy Christmas, Geddy's appreciative mother asked him what he might want for a present. Geddy had his eye on a guitar, and his mother gave him the $50 for its purchase on Christmas Eve of 1964.

Geddy was already a rock 'n' roll fan, constantly listening to the radio and having tried in jest to get Dad into the Beatles. He had already proven his musical ear on the family piano two years earlier—"a gift from God," his rabbi called it—taking after his father, who back in Germany would serenade Geddy's mother with a mandolin from beneath her window.

In their teens, Geddy and Alex were into the likes of the Who, Buffalo Springfield, Cream, the Rolling Stones, the Grateful Dead, the Yardbirds, and later, in the defining year of 1969, Led Zeppelin.



Geddy and Alex met through mutual friend Steve Shutt, a future Montreal Canadiens star and NHL Hall of Famer.

Arguably factoring into Geddy's centering were the strict months and months of formal Jewish prayer and mourning he had to perform upon his father's death. An aggravating stipulation for the boy of twelve had been the banishment of music, which, one might recall, would become the subject of a Rush concept side a few years hence.

Enter Fisherville Junior High in 1965, and rock 'n' roll was legitimately back in Geddy's life, early in the school year Geddy having completed his *yud bet chodesh*, or twelve months of mourning (actually eleven months and one day in his case, according to Lee). Indeed, Geddy consumed voraciously all things rock 'n' roll once he was again formally allowed to; years later, he would wonder if this banishment period was the defining factor in his interest in music. In any event, Geddy's starved enthusiasm for music, as maker and consumer, was quickly accelerated by the presence of a personable joke-cracker of a new chum named Alex.

Alex Zivojinovic (a.k.a. Lifeson) was born August 29, 1953, in the mining town of Fernie, British Columbia. Like Geddy, his parents had only recently arrived from political strife in Eastern Europe. Mother Melania's family had left Yugoslavia rather than take forced citizenship there (being of Russian descent) and were placed in a camp in Trieste, Italy, for six months before they were given the choice to emigrate to Australia, New Zealand, or Canada. Melania (informally Mellie) arrived in Canada on June 18, 1951, with her parents and two brothers, becoming, briefly, a family of farmers. It was in British Columbia, where Mellie had been working at a restaurant (with one brother at the coal mine, another at the mill), that she met Nenad, Alex's dad, a coal miner who had moved to town after his first wife passed away. They dated for a year and got married, with Alex arriving the following year. A sister, Sally, followed a month after the small family's uprooting to Toronto in April 1955.

The family started life in the big city right downtown, but moved out to Glencairn, then to the Jewish enclave Pleasant Avenue, and finally to Greyhound, home to a mix of nationalities, from Italians to Greeks to Chinese, along with naturalized Canadians. Mellie, having grown up amid the Serb versus Croat turmoil, was quick to ingrain in her children a respect for all peoples. Alex caught on quickly and grew into a polite and bubbly kid who was popular with his classmates.

Back at Fisherville Junior High, with buddies Geddy and Alex, as with millions of kids through the generations, rock 'n' roll had taken over youth consciousness. Geddy had actually already heard about Alex through a mutual friend, Steve Shutt, who went on to become a hockey superstar with the Montreal Canadiens. Steve suggested they jam, but it wasn't until Fisherville that they got together, things picking up when Geddy gravitated to the bass. But at this point, as Geddy put it, the two bonded more over "goofiness" than music, although a soaking-in process was starting to occur, just through listening to the latest British Invasion records in each other's basements.

Both Geddy and Alex could have made something of themselves academically, and both saw the pressure from their very traditional parents to do just that—doctor, lawyer, anything but this rock 'n' roll nonsense with no prospect of success. Yet school slowly fell away, both Alex and Geddy eventually dropping out in the twelfth grade. In tandem, parents slowly relented, noticing the dedication each had to this weirdness and to little else. After all, these were good kids who were proving themselves capable of working hard, paying off loans, and staying away from drugs.

"I started playing when I was about eleven years old," recalled Alex, who neglects to note that he first had taken up the viola. "I begged for a guitar for Christmas, and got an $11 Kent acoustic—it was just terrible, but my parents still have it [laughs]. Then the following Christmas my parents bought me a Canora, which sort of looked like a Gretsch Country Gentleman. Both were inexpensive, poorly made Japanese guitars. I borrowed the guy next door's Paul amp whenever I could, and taped Vox in black tape on the front of it [laughs]. I played for hours and hours and hours." And once in cahoots with Geddy, the playing for hours and hours became deafening basement jams, driving Geddy's grandmother crazy, while the mothers seemed more concerned with keeping a wary eye on which guys—and more importantly which girls—were entering and leaving the house. By this point, getting into their mid-teens, the two chums were into the likes of the Who, Buffalo Springfield, Cream, the Rolling Stones, the Grateful Dead, the Yardbirds, and later in the defining year of 1969, Led Zeppelin.

Pounding the drums through Rush's formative years was a schoolmate of Alex's named John Rutsey, only a handful of months older than Alex and Geddy but a lot flashier, a snappier dresser, and, yes, seemingly somehow savvier—hard to believe, but it was Rutsey who would later introduce Rush's songs at shows, as well as write the band's first lyrics. Before the formation of Rush proper, Alex and Geddy would play together and separately, an important point, because many early "Rush" jams involved Alex, John, and whoever else was around. In fact, in 1967, just prior to the formation of Rush, Alex and John were in a band called the Projection, which featured not Geddy on bass, but Al Grandy, brother of "Rush's first roadie," Ian Grandy.

"John was one of three brothers," explained Ian, when asked about Rutsey. "Bill, Mike, and John. His father, Howard Rutsey, had been a crime reporter for the old *Toronto Telegram* and had died of a heart attack before I knew John. John and my brother, Al, were in fourth grade together. I don't know exactly how they got together, but my brother was in the Projection with John, Alex Zivojinovic, Bill Fitzgerald, and 'Doc' Cooper in 1967. If they played actual gigs, it would have been at parties and I don't know where else. John was the guy who would bug everyone to practice, and I think thought of himself as a 'rock and roller.' I've said it before and I'll say it again: there would have been no Rush without John. He never had any kind of job during that time, living at home with his mom, Eva. Anyway, John led the guys as far as being 'glam rockers,' with really flashy jackets and pants, and eight-inch-high boots. One time, he was speaking to me at the [Toronto club] Gasworks and I said, 'Didn't we used to be the same height?' He laughed and said, 'Well, maybe a long time ago!'"

Al Grandy was soon replaced by one Jeff Jones, who would wind up with the distinction of being the only bass player in Rush besides Geddy. It was Jeff, Alex, and John Rutsey who played the first gig ever under the Rush nameplate. Nobody had really liked the name the Projection, and at the suggestion of John's older brother Bill, the name Rush was adopted, drug connotations notwithstanding. The three convened for the inaugural "Rush" show September 18, 1968, at the Coff-in, which was in the basement of St. Theodore of Canterbury, a nondescript suburban church in the neighborhood. It would be the first and last Rush gig for Jones, who had been overbooked and saw this band as more of a casual pickup situation. For the band's second show, the following Friday—again at the Coff-in—Jones had apparently gotten himself drunk and was about to miss the gig, with Geddy getting the emergency call. During a two-hour rehearsal, the trio hastily came up

A young Alex (second from left) and John Rutsey (second from right) in their early band, Hadrian. They are flanked by Joe Perna (left, bass and vocals) and Lindy Young (right, keys and rhythm guitar).

© Rock 'n' Roll Comics, Revolutionary Comics. Courtesy Jay Allen Sanford

© Rock 'n' Roll Comics, Revolutionary Comics. Courtesy Jay Allen Sanford

with a dozen hard blues chestnuts they could all abide by. In effect, the first "Rush" show and the first Rush show were both at the Coff-in underneath an Anglican church.

Rush began gigging regularly, mostly at high school dances, Alex and Geddy still with one foot in their own educations but part-time jobs necessary to pay back the band's mounting equipment debts, a drag on income that would persist at least up into the early 1980s, except on a grander scale.

In 1969, a self-starter and budding show promoter named Ray Danniels had entered the picture, checking out the band at the Coff-in and hanging out with the boys on his adopted Yorkville home turf, hippie central in Toronto at the time, the place to see your future in rock 'n' roll (although mostly folk) take flight. Yorkville was a pilgrimage the guys made from the 'burbs with a combined sense of reverence and trepidation. It was all about looking cool, having the right hair, and making an impression—after all, these people were future fans and employers. Danniels, incredibly still the band's manager forty-plus years later, was soon collaborating with the boys on big dreams. It is of note that one Lindy Young was also in Rush for a brief spell, playing keyboards and second guitar, Lindy being the brother of Geddy's future wife, Nancy.

"Ray was from a town called Waterdown," said Grandy, "and I guess he always wanted to manage bands. He was hanging around from about May 1969, and you have to realize he was only seventeen at the time. Anyway, he had his agency at the time, Universal Sound, which had a couple of bands like Fear, in addition to Rush. There was no bar scene yet for rock bands, so it was a matter of playing high schools and beach houses."

It was also in 1969 that the band went through yet another name change, from Rush to Hadrian, and then an ousting of Geddy from the band, who went on to form a blues band first called Ogilvle and then Judd. Ray continued to work with both acts, in fact finding himself doing better with Geddy's act. Once Lindy had defected over to Geddy's band and Joe Perna had quit Hadrian, Alex and John were essentially without a band. It only took Geddy to knock Judd on its head in September of that year, given Lindy's departure for college, for the trio Rush to be born (notwithstanding a three-month period in 1971 that found the band augmented by Mitch Bossi on second guitar).

Inspired very much by Led Zeppelin's deft manipulation of light and shade, as well as the new, post-psych genre of progressive rock, Geddy began to sing higher, belting it

The short-lived (three months) line-up from 1971 that included Mitch Bossi (front) on second guitar.

out on a growing stash of original compositions, such as "Run Willie Run," "Feel So Good," "Garden Road," "Keep in Line," "Child Reborn," "Margarite," "Fancy Dancer," and "Morning Star," that were slowly being shoehorned into the band's crowd-pleasing covers set. "When we were growing up," noted Geddy in 1976, "the big bands were Zeppelin and Beck. We used to do a lot of Zeppelin material before we started writing our own stuff and I used to have to scream to hit the high notes. Now it's all pretty natural."

"I don't acknowledge the resemblance the way most people do," noted Geddy, on the Robert Plant comparisons that would dog him all through the '70s. "Superficially, we are similar . . . yes. I have a very high voice, so does Robert Plant, but it's an entirely different voice. Both bands play at a pretty high volume, but the music is different. And when you look inside at what motivates the music, you see it's very different."

"In Canada, you're influenced by American things, but you also absorb a great deal of the Commonwealth country's British background," continued Lee. "Our influences are still around—that makes it a bit tougher. We're still a young band. With us, we're still competing with some of our very influences."

Adding to the pressure of working day and night, Alex got his girlfriend Charlene McNichol pregnant with son Justin, prompting their shacking up together and very soon after, marriage. Piling on the work, the band's prospects for the future experienced a pronounced uptick with the lowering of the drinking age from 21 to 18 on January 1, 1971. Suddenly, the band could gig every night of the week if they could hack it, rather than a couple of nights for high school kids. "It was like when the Beatles played for weeks at a time in Germany," said Grandy. "So much time to fill, so songs would come and go, and you're playing them again and again. We were a big band on that circuit and filled the bars, leading you to think you could actually make a living doing this."

"The worst was Northern Ontario," noted Geddy on the age-old quandary of originals versus covers. "They don't care what you do. They don't care if you do the greatest original material in the world if their ears haven't heard it before. They just want to get drunk and hear their favorite tunes. It was just persistence. We only did tunes that we liked, and we'd sneak in an original here and there. Eventually, we built up our own little following. We just kept ourselves going. My family didn't understand what I was doing . . . until I started making money!"

Ah, yes, it was at this juncture that the guys had the penultimate talks with their parents about quitting high school (heartbreakingly close to graduation) and pursuing their rock 'n' roll dream. Having delicately reassured their parents of their intentions to go back to school if things didn't work out (well, Geddy, anyway), the band maintained their presence on the high school circuit, driving farther afield to places like North Bay, Sudbury, Kirkland Lake, London, Deep River, and Windsor, while also venturing into recording, having given it a shot in a crude facility in the notorious hippie-fied Rochdale College and at a second workmanlike setup called Sound Horn.

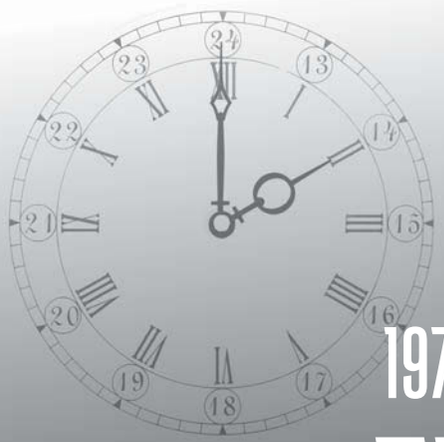
Still, the high school circuit had started to "erode," as Ray put it, and Rush actually saw reduced activity in 1971, not taking full advantage of the lower drinking age. Eventually, however, Ray had them regularly appearing at a handful of rooms in Toronto, sometimes for a week at a time, allowing the band some semblance of steady income. In conjunction, Danniels mixed it up between cover charges and selling tickets, so that by early 1972, Rush was playing what could be called small concerts.

Clowning with Ray Danniels.
© Bruce Cole–Plum Studios

In 1970 and 1971 the band worked the Ontario high school circuit hard, playing locales like London, Deep River, and Sudbury. "The worst was Northern Ontario," Geddy recalled. "They don't care what you do. . . . They just want to get drunk and hear their favorite tunes."

"Now well established in the Midwest, with their second album, *Fly by Night*, Rush on a staggering tour are pushing to hurl themselves over the high jump to American fame. Bringing their traditional brand of Canadian rock to the suburban U.S., Rush is challenging Bachman-Turner Overdone for the title as most important musical export this side of Joni Mitchell's cheekbones."

—Michael Gross, *Circus Rave*, 1975



1973–1974
ENTER THE PROFESSOR

WRYLY SPEAKING, by 1973, Rush were rock 'n' roll veterans. Yet they hadn't made a record, nor had they ventured far from home, their ingrained Canadian practicality perhaps standing them in good stead—baby steps, sure and steady wins the race, et cetera.

Keeping it local, the band had shopped the two-track demos from the Rochdale session around to the Canadian record labels, mostly sleepy branch economies with limited power. "We took about four months, I guess, trying to get a record deal for Rush in this country," said Ray, not without some bile, "and couldn't get anybody interested at all. There was just no reaction. The attitude was, just because that kind of band can do well in England, it couldn't happen over here. We would literally just give the album away if someone made a commitment to promote it."

Relegated to DIY status and without much fanfare, Rush decided to cut an indie single, pairing a cover of the Buddy Holly/Rolling Stones hit

"Not Fade Away" with a workmanlike barroom rocker of Rutsey's called "You Can't Fight It." The Moon Records 7-inch, recorded at Eastern Sound on the cheap in the middle of the night, became a hot item in Geddy's mom's convenience store as well as at Rush gigs, selling out quickly. By this stage, local booking adversaries Ray Danniels and industry veteran Vic Wilson had bonded over lunch, forming in December 1972 a management company called SRO Productions (as in Standing Room Only) on Eglinton Avenue in Toronto, partway between the 'burbs and the downtown clubs where Rush would cut its teeth. Wilson recalled SRO as a happy family, with Ray and himself splitting management duties, the band being essentially five guys, namely, Geddy (the quiet one), John Rutsey (the spokesman), roadies Ian Grandy and Liam Burt, and of course Alex, who would bring the office homemade soup, courtesy of his mom.

Geddy and Alex have always quipped that the nerdy guy they brought into the band "knew words," "read books," and perhaps most amusingly, "spoke English better than anyone we knew." © *Rich Galbraith*

Author collection

© Rock 'n' Roll Comics, Revolutionary Comics. Courtesy Jay Allen Sanford

Rush's first record was a cover of Buddy Holly's "Not Fade Away" b/w the John Rutsey–penned rocker "You Can't Fight It."

With the single not making any waves, management figured that perhaps the labels would take notice if they cranked out a whole album and plopped it on their desks. The grinding hard rocker that would become the self-titled debut long-player was initially recorded, like the single, at Eastern, but then rerecorded at a more upscale facility when the quality of the original tapes was thought to be lacking aggression. "The first stab at that album was done in eight hours following a gig," explained Alex. "We cut it at Eastern Sound in Toronto and we were warmed up after the show so most of the songs came in two or three takes. Then we decided we could do it better, so we recut the whole thing eight months later at Toronto Sound."

Enter one Terry Brown, an already seasoned producer who would become associated with the Rush nameplate throughout all of the band's classic albums in the '70s and early '80s. "We started a studio together in Toronto that took the technology of London, which was way ahead of the game at that point, as was New York. We took that technology to Toronto and started a big multitrack studio there. And as a result of that, we sort of got some notoriety and had some hit records there too, and became known by the Rush management team, and one Vic Wilson, who was partners with Ray Danniels at the time. Vic was from England too, so we've got, as we used to say, from one teabag to another. 'I know this teabag over at this studio. He'll help us out.'

"They had been in the studio, working on the first record, which was the pink Rush record," continued Brown. "They had been doing the graveyard shift. So they were getting very cheap time in the middle of the night and after they'd worked all day and did what they were doing at that time, getting their craft together and booking shows and playing arenas, small arenas, local school arenas. So they came over to me and asked me if I would help them finish it off because it got to a point when they really didn't know how to finish it. Fortunately, I had some experience at that point, having had some hit records and I'd sort of learned an awful lot from some really good people. So they came in . . . and this was in the days when John Rutsey was playing drums too; it was the first incarnation. But they came in and we cut three songs: 'Finding My Way,' 'Here Again,' and 'Need Some Love.' But anyway, within three days, we had cut three songs and mixed the entire record.

"And it came out to not a huge amount of success," laughed Brown. "No accolades. And funny enough, people I was working with, my peers at the time, were saying to me, 'What do you see in that band?' And I'd say, 'Well, I see a lot of success here.' And one of the things that really took me . . . well, Ged's voice for starters was astonishing. And he was really young and he could sing like a bird. Still does, but that was my first exposure to Ged. And Alex's guitar playing blew me away. We would double the guitars, which was a thing I was very much into at that point. And we only had three days to do all this work. So we did guitar track, drums and bass, and then I said to him, 'Let's double it.' And I'll never forget, to this day, I put the original guitar on the left speaker, we put the new guitar on the right speaker, and he doubled it from top to bottom, flawlessly, in one take. And it sounded like one huge guitar, it was so accurate. And I had this huge grin on my face, and that just stuck with me forever, how good he was at that. So when peopled said, 'What do

you see in this band? It's just like a loud noise and you really don't hear anything.' Well, I think you're wrong. I hear strong melodies, some great playing, unique vocal sounds, great guitar playing, and I think they're going to do very well."

In other words, Rush had put in their hours, arriving at the studio ready to record at more than a competent level, at least in the old-school manner of playing everything true and live, of making records work without the budget for bells and whistles. The end result was a fiercely electric album of hard rock and heaviness previously too bold for and from Canadian tastes. *Rush* was Zeppelin-esque, to be sure, especially at the vocal slot, but there was also a compelling variety and quality to Alex's riffs, the album's hard-charging emphasis on guitars set to synch with the rise of Aerosmith, Kiss, Blue Öyster Cult, and Ted Nugent, bands that would soon be sharing stages with Rush as the Canadians ventured south, rarely to come home again.

Heaviest of the lot were "What You're Doing" and "Finding My Way," one Sabbatherian, the next Zeppelin-esque, along with blue-collar anthem "Working Man," which was the track picked up on by Donna Halper and staffers at WMMS radio in Cleveland, a ringing endorsement that is widely credited with breaking the band stateside. Things snowballed from there. ATI booking agent Ira Blacker had sent a copy of the album to Mercury, where Cliff Burnstein (later to become one of rock's biggest managers) dropped needle on lead track "Finding My Way" and promptly checked with Halper on the situation with this crazy record in Cleveland. Donna confirmed the mania for Rush in Cleveland and then suggested he listen to the rest of the record, particularly "Working Man." By the end of the day, after Cliff made furtive phone calls to the president of Mercury, a deal was worked out and Rush was signed on to the label, home to Bachman-Turner Overdrive and the New York Dolls, and U.S. representation for Thin Lizzy and Uriah Heep.

"Trio serves up a dose of good hard rock," wrote *Billboard*, reviewing the album, "highlighted by the often Robert Plant–like lead vocals of Geddy Lee and the powerful guitar work of Alex Lifeson and solid drumming from John Rutsey. Good material here for AM or FM play. Only complaint might be the strong similarity to Led Zeppelin, but this cannot really be considered a complaint when one examines the success Zeppelin has and does enjoy."

Mark Kmetzko from *The Scene*, reviewing an early Cleveland stand, repeatedly made similar comparisons to Zeppelin, adding, "I really don't see what all the excitement over Rush is about. They're just another 'high energy' rock band who prides itself on its ability to 'boogie.' Big deal. I can stay home and listen to Foghat if I want that. From what I observed Monday night, Rush's forte is supposed to be the vocals of bass player Geddy Lee. He doesn't have a good voice, but it's one that's hard to forget. My comments aside, the crowd ate it up. They loved hearing Lee soar into his soprano register and make neat contorted faces. If that's what it's about, then I guess they succeeded."

The U.S. record deal, a hot-clocking proto-metal album, U.S. tour dates—it was a rock 'n' roll dream come true. Except if you were John Rutsey. It was all a little much for the drummer, notwithstanding other concerns within the camp. Geddy and

The band honed their live chops as an opening act for a variety of headliners, both at home in Canada and in the northern tier of the United States.

SRO-hosted party, Piccadilly Tube, Toronto, August 1973. © *Bruce Cole–Plum Studios*

Right: Colonial Tavern, 1974. *Author collection*

Below: Promo shot, circa 1973. © *Bruce Cole–Plum Studios*

Alex have hinted in the press about John's dark moods, and then there's the incident during work on the album when Rutsey showed up and tore up all the lyrics he had written for the record. Even at the pure musicianship end, John was more of a 4/4 "Bad Company" guy than Alex and Geddy were on their way to becoming. More significantly, John partied a little harder than he should have, being a diabetic.

"Rutsey's health was really bad," said Geddy, in one of the band's first features back in December 1974. "He was running himself right into the ground. The type of schedule we had is rough on a healthy person. It's hard to put up with, but he was really suffering from having to play so hard so often. Also, Alex and I have always moved in the same musical direction, and he was growing in a different way. I knew—I think we all knew—that it was eventually going to happen. It should have happened a year before it did."

Courtesy Jeffrey Morgan

RUSH

Jeffrey Morgan

Ask any working man who wouldn't know Ayn Rand from Saran Wrap and he'll tell you that not only is Rush's eponymous album the greatest Canadian rock 'n' roll record ever waxed, it sonically smearcases all other would-be Canucklehead contenders and leaves them tied for first loser. In other words, this one oozes to overflowing with everything you'd want a raucous rock record to reek of. It's the only Rush album I've ever heard, and it's the only Rush album you'll ever need to hear too.

And while we're on the topic of singular events, the first—and only—time that I saw Rush perform live was in 1973 at their inaugural recital when they opened for the New York Dolls at Toronto's Victory Burlesque, where illustrious cleavage heavers such as Alexandra the Great 48 would regularly strut their stacks down the long center runway that bisected the seats some ten rows deep.

Nowadays everyone says that they were there that night, but I can prove it with unimpeachable authority because, as evidenced by the ducat on display, I still have my ticket from that epochal evening. The Dolls were great, but what we're here for is the opening act, which, at the time of their appearance, *hadn't even released an album*.

Not that it mattered, because the lay-down-the-law firm of Rutsey, Lifeson & Lee MFIC proceeded to storm the stage and decimate the entire area with an unrelenting salvo of heavy metal shrapnel that began with the opening riff of "Finding My Way" and didn't end until the last brain-buffeting power chord had peeled the pasties off the panting usherettes. But that advance onslaught was *nothing* compared with the main invasion that occurred four months later when Rush's first album was released on their own Moon Records label. After wearing out several copies in as many days, I barely managed to recuperate long enough to write the following review:

To say that it's a killer is the understatement of the year. *Rush* is virtually perfect from start to finish and it continues to burn rubber every time I sandwich it between my De-Stat disc and my Dual pickup. I'm listening to it right now as a matter of fact and, even though it's 2:45 in the morning, I've got it cranked up full to give the next door neighbors an impromptu education in what *real* rock 'n' roll sounds like. It's non-stop splatter music and you don't even notice the silence between the tracks. Power, power, power, *that's* what this LP is all about and *that's* why you owe it to yourself to grab a copy *now*. It wails like a child trapped in an abandoned refrigerator—and is twice as much fun.

Four decades later, I still stand by that accurate assessment. Objectively speaking, you don't have to be an individualist to know that the ladder of success is best climbed by stepping on the rungs of opportunity—but how extraordinary is it that Rush's first step was to *build* their own ladder by self-releasing an iconic album that continues to represent the living embodiment of everything that rock 'n' roll stands for? That's a rhetorical question, by the way. But if you're looking for answers, *Rush* contains eight of them.

Which is why my writing this Rush reiteration has got me thinking that it's time for me to upgrade my fond memories of 1973 by going to see them perform live in concert for a *second* time—and as soon as I scrape up another four bucks, that's exactly what I'm going to do. I hear they've got a new drummer.

"It wasn't like there was a falling out or anything," recalled Alex, decades later. "He didn't want to do what we were doing, so he quit. In fact, that last year, in '73 we had a substitute drummer for a while because John was really sick. We had some gigs we had to play, and so we had this substitute drummer. Jerry Fielding was his name. Then John came back in, but with the prospect of touring and all of these things that were suddenly happening, all of these good opportunities, he just wasn't into it. That was really odd at the time, because we were so excited about it; it was a dream come true but he didn't really want to be a part of it."

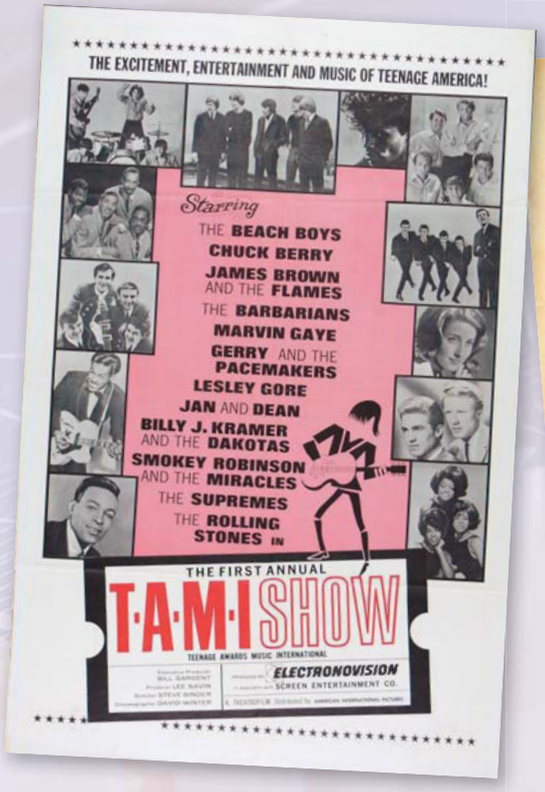
"We had American gigs lined up and no drummer," remembered right-hand man, Ian Grandy. "We were set up at a rehearsal place and three drummers tried out. The first guy was nowhere, the second guy was a guy they knew and liked but I think all of us knew he wasn't good enough. Then this guy Neil shows up. Geddy looks at me and says, 'He's a greaseball,' because Neil had what came to be called his 'submariner' hairstyle. Neil had this small, funky, gray drum kit and set it up himself. They proceeded to jam for about forty minutes and I recorded it as best I could with three microphones. After that, Geddy asked me was this guy as good as they thought he was, and I couldn't do anything but agree because I don't think I had ever seen [or] heard anyone play like he did. They talked together by themselves for quite a while and, presto—we had a new drummer. Looking back I'd have to say that worked out pretty well."

The Neil of which Ian spoke is of course Neil "The Professor" Peart, born September 12, 1952, in Hamilton, Ontario, after which the family migrated to more rural climes. Neil, like Geddy and Alex, had similarly wrestled with the quandary of pleasing one's parents versus the long-haired rock 'n' roll dream. For Neil, it started with big-band jazz, particularly Gene Krupa, and then quickly progressed through formal lessons (meaning lots of rudiments

Above: Neil was demoralized and working in the parts department at Dalziel Equipment when he received an invitation to audition for Rush. *Author collection*

Right: Like many of his generation, Neil was profoundly influenced by the TV presentation of *The T.A.M.I. Show* in 1964.

Far right: April 1969. Pre-Rush, Neil had chalked up more serious credits than both Geddy and Alex, writing and recording with several bands, including the Majority.



and snare work), until a captivating TV presentation of *The T.A.M.I. Show* film in 1964 lit the way (highlights: James Brown and the Rolling Stones), followed by immersion into the wonderful drum tornado that was Keith Moon and the more skillful and creative possibilities presented by John Bonham. All the while, Neil had chalked up more serious credits than Alex or Geddy, writing and recording with a number of bands, including the Majority and J. R. Flood.

Neil had been working part-time at Dalziel Equipment (where his dad was employed full-time), but in fact had already lit out for swinging London, where he found himself a small-fish drummer in a big pond of pounders. Back home, demoralized and working in the parts department at Dalziel, he received a visit from Vic Wilson (and Johnny Trojan, the buddy who had recommended Neil) in a white Corvette. Neil was noncommittal about the invitation to audition for Rush, but once he did, the connection was obvious. Once part of the fold and rehearsing like mad, the band had ten days to prepare for their first U.S. tour (their first tour of any sort, really) supporting the high-flying Uriah Heep.

Geddy and Alex have always quipped that this nerdy guy they had brought into the band "knew words," "read books," and perhaps most amusingly, "spoke English better than anyone we knew, in fact, better than anyone we had ever met." Quiet and intense as Neil was, the three bonded over Monty Python and prog rock, Geddy and Alex putting aside their slight intimidation at his school smarts. It only seemed natural that come work on the band's second album, Neil would be asked to write the lyrics. Odd task for a drummer, but after all, the drummer had always written the lyrics in Rush.

"I never thought seriously about writing lyrics until I joined this band," said Neil, "and it became a necessity because no one else was doing it. I'm an avid reader, though. Actually, I'm a high school dropout. But I've educated myself. The music we're playing is the music we honestly want to play. I like playing hard rock; it gives me a lot of scope. There have been inferior hard rock bands and people have used it to disguise a lack of talent. Our strongest point is our mentality, I think. The thing I love about this band is that we're honest. We're not in it purely as a matter of economics. It's fun and enjoyable. We would like to become rich, but that's not our sole objective. We don't see the point of trying to get a hit single by appealing to the lowest common denominator."

The songs that would pepper *Fly by Night*, issued February 15, 1975, were written mostly on the road, the band bonding in cramped cars across the Midwest, jamming at soundchecks and, as Geddy put it, "in hotel rooms trying to come up with heavy metal on an acoustic guitar."

Fly by Night represented a massive step forward. Critics oversimplify the character of the *Rush* album as bashing, barroom rock 'n' roll. Actually, it was more than that, something closer to what the more studious veterans of rock were doing. *Fly by Night* found the guys venturing well beyond what the established bands had been doing within the hard rock idiom, truly and purposely combining the art rock grandeur of Yes, King Crimson, Genesis, and Emerson Lake & Palmer with the quaking guitars of (proto) metal, spiced with Geddy's hair-whitening vocals, the crackling, exacting note densities emanating from Neil's large kit, and the roaring rear of Alex and Ged. In effect, a whole new genre called progressive metal was born. Surely, Zeppelin, Heep, Sabbath, and Deep Purple had periodically been

© Rock 'n' Roll Comics, Revolutionary Comics. Courtesy Jay Allen Sanford

FLY BY NIGHT

Neil Daniels

After the departure of drummer John Rutsey, who was not committed to the band's hectic touring schedule, *Fly by Night* is notable not only because it was the second Rush album but because it marked the studio debut of Neil Peart, who has undoubtedly become one of the greatest and most revered rock drummers in popular music history. Peart had made his official introduction to Rush on July 29, 1974, a fortnight before the band's then forthcoming U.S. tour.

The album was recorded at Toronto Sound Studios with Terry Brown, marking the beginning of his and Rush's long-running and successful artist-producer collaboration. (Previously, Brown had remixed the band's 1974 self-titled debut.) Audiophiles and anoraks have looked deeply into the band's recording history, noting equipment upgrades at Toronto Sound, the studio used to record the sophomore effort and the aforementioned debut.

Peart would become an integral member of the Canadian trio not only because of his drumming talents but also due to his skills as a wordsmith. Peart's interest in science fiction and fantasy literature, notably with a dystopian outlook, would become a stable of the band's trademark sound and image. At the time of *Fly by Night*, Peart was reading the writings of the controversial right-wing philosopher Ayn Rand (evident on "Anthem"). On a lyrical level it's obvious why academics have become so engrossed by Rush. "Rivendell" is focused heavily on fantastical themes evoking strong lyrical images, while the epic eight-minute track "By-Tor & the Snow Dog" concerns the story of Rush roadie Howard Ungerleider during his stay at the home of Anthem Records owner Ray Danniels, where he was not greeted warmly by Danniels' dogs. The title track was influenced by Peart's brief sojourn to London as a young musician in his pre-Rush days. The closing track, "In the End," is evidently inspired by Led Zeppelin, as both Geddy Lee and Alex Lifeson were enthusiastic fans of 1960s British bands. The heaviest song on the opus, however, is most emphatically "Beneath, Between & Behind," and although the band may have focused on complex arrangements and instrumentals, there are still the touches of the blues on *Fly by Night* that had been fully present on the first album.

With Terry Brown and Neil Peart onboard, Rush developed the band's trademark sound. Despite minor tinges of Zeppelin and the Who, *Fly by Night* marks the true beginnings of Rush as they would develop and harness a musically challenging and thought-provoking sound all of their own throughout the decade and beyond. By comparison, *Rush* was more of an homage to the band's influences than anything else. It would take time for the trio to fully develop their storytelling techniques, but *Fly by Night* is as much a Neil Peart album as it is a Rush album, given how integral he would become in helping the band shift toward a new, more original direction.

The 37-minute album was released in February 1975, and although it may not be regarded as one of the band's finest, it certainly has some standout songs. To be sure, *Fly by Night* has its strengths and weaknesses in almost equal measure, but after the radio-friendly sound of its predecessor, Rush was becoming a proper prog rock outfit.

to this place, but Rush took to it in stride, pairing, on the literary side, swords, sorcery, science fiction, and the requisite talk about rocking, with the idea of unapologetically playing up a pretentious storm sure to rile critics who had always crowed variations of "less is more" as the most reliable method of making music with taste.

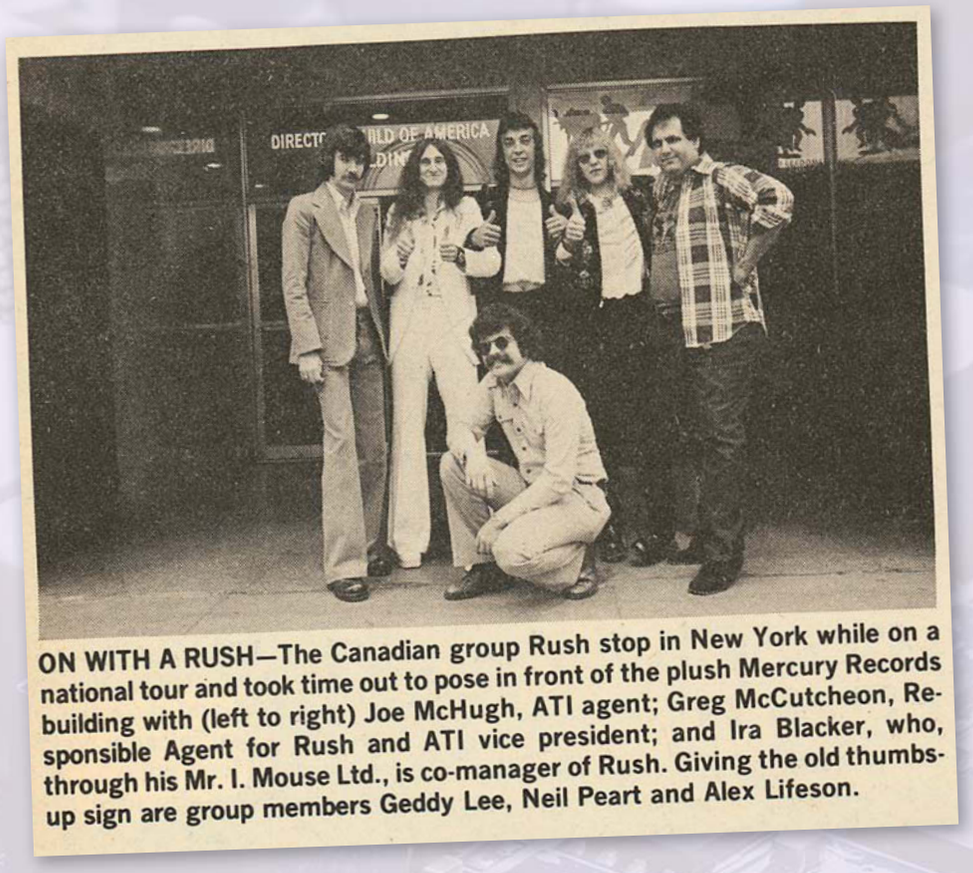
"It showed a progression from the first album," Geddy told *Circus* after four months of hard touring in support of it. "We're very happy with it. We recorded it as an album. Singles would be nice, but that's incidental." Addressing "By-Tor & the Snow Dog," the first of many complex Rush epics to come, Geddy added, "All the music in that relates to the story. It has visual sounds, monsters, screeching animals. It's where we want to head."

Terry Brown, back to produce the band, but this time from start to finish, figured you couldn't underestimate the effect Neil had on Rush's quick-firing band chemistry. "Well, for starters, he came with this whole lyrical background that he wanted to bring to the band. He was a great player. And he just gave the band a whole new lease on life. It was almost too complicated at that point, but we made it work. And we felt that it was going to be the way to go. It wasn't my decision—you have to appreciate that I was purely co-producing those records back then. We made *Fly by Night* in twenty-one days, from the very beginning [when] they walked in the studio to when they walked out and Vic picked up the masters. That's pretty damned quick. So I didn't have a lot of time to form a lot of opinions. But I was very happy with his performance. I loved the direction the tunes were taking, and I felt it had tremendous potential."

Rush would score a minor hit with "Fly by Night," the title track and a metal-lite paean to the road that amusingly demonstrates the band's over-the-top performance approach upon a structure that, in other hands, might be a painfully plain AM radio number. Elsewhere, the band exhibits flashy metal chops, "Anthem" folding in upon itself with panache, "Best I Can" and "Beneath, Between & Behind" serving as platforms for Neil's meticulous, bright, drama-filled whirls. With *Fly By Night*, Rush had indeed found a signature sound, one that they would nourish, poke, and cajole but not wholly reconstitute for the next six records over six exhausting years. But first they would have to experience the soul-breaking reversal of fortune that would be their next record, a dark work of art, and its subsequent tour playing to small gatherings of the confused.

Fly by Night found the band truly and purposely combining the art rock grandeur of prog giants like Yes, King Crimson, Genesis, and ELP with the quaking guitars of proto metal.

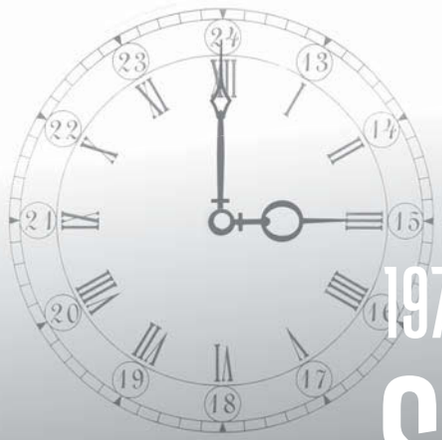
By late 1974 a visit to their label's New York City offices was newsworthy enough to garner some attention in the October 19 issue of *Billboard*.



ON WITH A RUSH—The Canadian group Rush stop in New York while on a national tour and took time out to pose in front of the plush Mercury Records building with (left to right) Joe McHugh, ATI agent; Greg McCutcheon, Responsible Agent for Rush and ATI vice president; and Ira Blacker, who, through his Mr. I. Mouse Ltd., is co-manager of Rush. Giving the old thumbs-up sign are group members Geddy Lee, Neil Peart and Alex Lifeson.

"We've been compared to everybody from the New York Dolls to Led Zeppelin and Humble Pie, but all those comparisons are just superficial. Like, Robert Plant and I both have high voices so they expect us to play 'Whole Lotta Love.'"

—Geddy Lee, quoted by Rick Johnson, *Creem*, 1975



1975–1976

SOMETHING FOR NOTHING

Opposite: All the World's a Stage tour, Civic Center, Springfield, Massachusetts, December 9, 1976. *Fin Costello/Redferns/Getty Images*

HARD TO BELIEVE, but it was not uncommon in the '70s to crank out two studio albums in a year, the mortar between the bricks being live dates five days a week for months on end. Rush, being hardworking Canadians with salt-of-the-earth parents (not to mention a couple of whip-snapping managers) complied with the era's mercilessly compressed timetables, taking all the work they could get following the encouraging success of *Fly by Night*. So there they were, September 24, 1975, with a second Peart-fanciful album, this one brandishing the mighty title *Caress of Steel* and emerging seven months after the last.

Delving even further into the realm of prog-soundtracked fantasy, the album featured a second side containing the suite "The Fountain of Lamneth." What's more, half of side one's real estate was consumed by a similar multipart epic called "The Necromancer." In the conventional song department, this left only the quirky "I Think I'm Going Bald," a proto speed metal history lesson called "Bastille Day," and the radio hopeful "Fly by Night" reprise called "Lakeside Park." The dark vibe of the record was

CARESS OF STEEL

Jeff Wagner

On the back of the fairly popular *Fly by Night*, Rush indulged their prog tendencies to greater extent with their third album, *Caress of Steel*. Comfortable with new production cohort Terry Brown, the band's willingness to widen their scope for album number three was an attitude that also carried them nicely through the rest of the decade. Much of *Caress of Steel*'s character is the result of delving further into expanded song lengths, its five songs taking up 45 minutes, two of them swallowing up nearly 33 minutes of that running time. Grand designs, for sure.

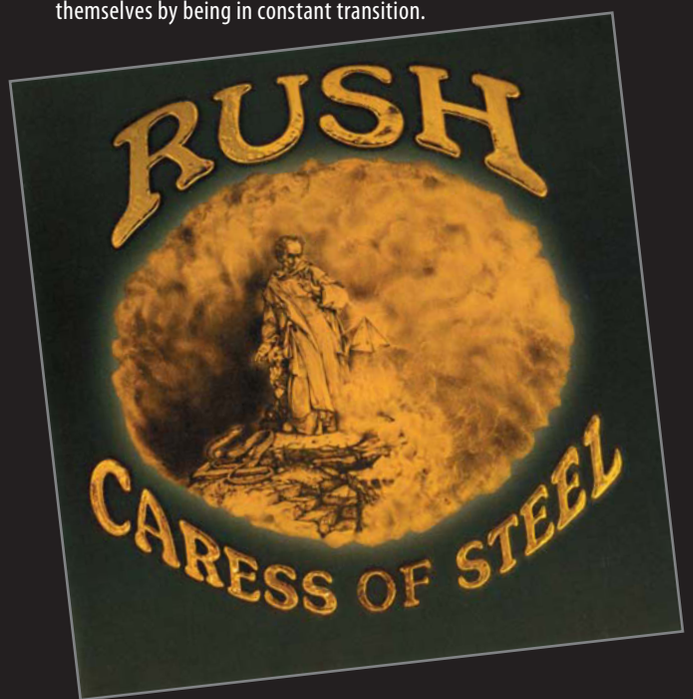
If early Rush influence Led Zeppelin can be described as *proto-metal*, then album opener "Bastille Day" might as well be considered the state of the nascent heavy metal art circa 1975—no *proto* about it. The Zep influence is strong here, but the song's majestic precision thrust and hulking rhythmic attack—similar to the previous album's "Anthem"—helped distinguish Rush from its influences and predecessors.

The second track, "I Think I'm Going Bald," was bound to be the album's odd song out. Written for Max Webster main man Kim Mitchell (and, indeed, it sounds more like one of their tunes) and a deliberate answer to Kiss's "Goin' Blind" (whom the band befriended on tour), the song's simplistic structure was the final one Rush would write that resembled their derivative debut. "Bald" is a slice of lighthearted fun on an album otherwise dark and foggy. It'll never be considered a Rush classic, even as deep album tracks go, but wow, what a scorcher of a Lifeson solo. Like a hybrid of Page and Frehley, the minute-long song-ending sequence proves Lifeson a guitarist with a special approach, something he stamps all over this album—like his jazzy freewheeling throughout the pastoral "Lakeside Park." The song's atmosphere synchs well with the earthy, nearly underproduced recording, a hazy, languid, nostalgic walk that expands the scope of the album and primes gears for the dynamic variety immediately around the corner.

And here's where it gets weird. "The Necromancer"—ten minutes of epic fantasy—incorporates drifting psychedelia, slicing slabs of metal, vise-tight riff explosions, and narration from what sounds like an old, stoned wizard (it's Neil Peart, actually). Each part is impressive, although it lacks the cohesion of some of their other grandiose biggies.

Then there's the band's first side-long endeavor. While not considered the greatest of Rush's three twenty-minute songs, "The Fountain of Lamneth" offers much ear candy. Most of its six segments could have existed as songs of their own, while "Didacts and Narpets" is one strange minute of experimentation that remains the band's most bizarre recorded sequence. Frantic drums, frantic Geddy, punctuated rhythmic blasts, and the ending scream of "Listen!" all act as segue to the song's most brilliant segment, "No One at the Bridge." Featuring some very aggressive vocals, its melancholic, desperate beginning turns into otherworldly doom, punctuated with those great Geddy shrieks. His vocals, as the lyrics convey, "scream out desperation" and then dive back into tranquility. As complete and well written a twenty-minute song as any young band could be expected to write, "The Fountain of Lamneth" is a perfect representative of the gray melancholy and parchment-paper fantasy that permeates the entirety of the album and even its packaging.

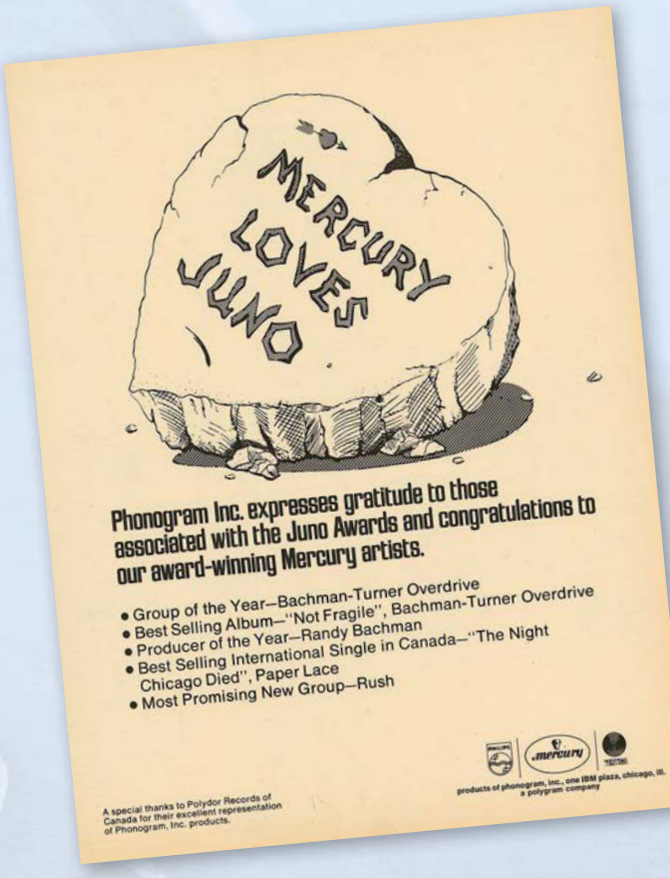
With a botched album cover (gold instead of the intended steely silver), *Caress of Steel* was similarly cursed in other areas. Disappointing sales and an equally difficult tour resulted in pressure being put on the band to offer something more accessible next time around. Of course, history shows the band members would only continue to follow their hearts and indulge their minds and talents. *Caress of Steel* is one of the great transitional Rush albums, but then Rush only ever defined themselves by being in constant transition.



augmented by the mysterious, alchemical nature of the artwork, the first for the band by Hugh Syme, famous now for his legendary Rush covers over the ensuing decades, but in 1975, little more than keyboardist for the Ian Thomas Band, another act in the SRO stable.

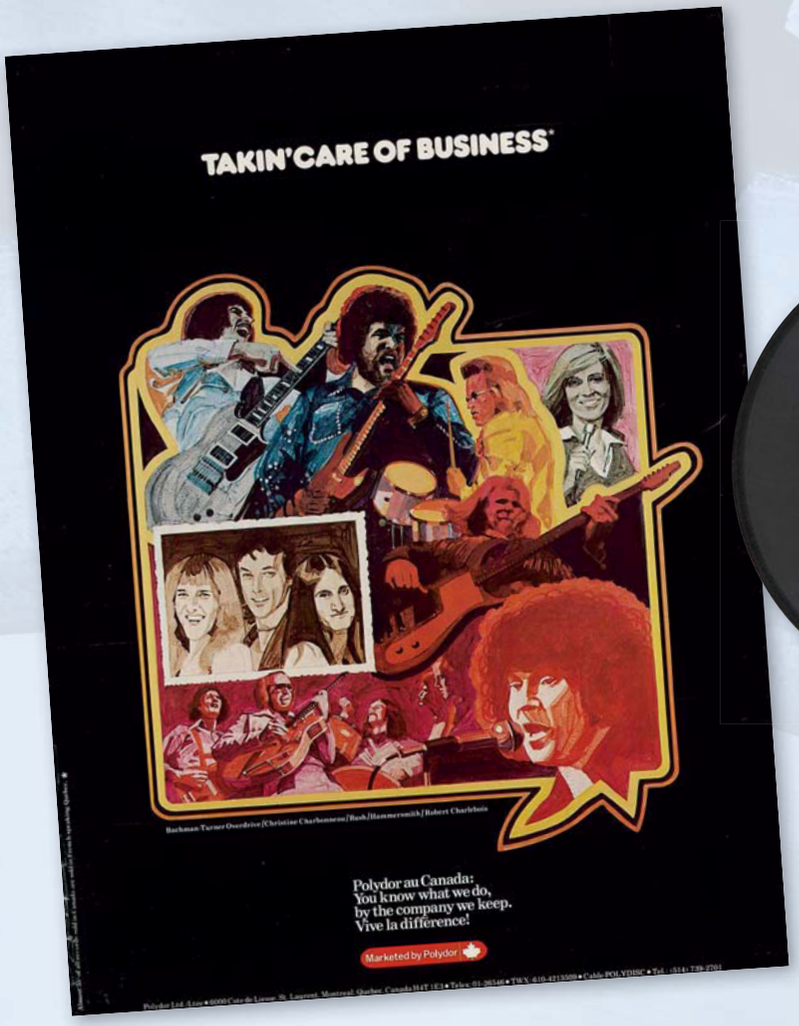
"*Caress of Steel* was a bit of a different story," understated producer Terry Brown. "That's going back right to [the] beginning of their career, when we were still developing where we were going and how we wanted to do things. We went out on a limb with that record, for sure—and it almost cost me my career. But I think since then it's proven to be a substantial record that a lot of fans liked. It was the stepping stone to *2112*. And after we'd finished it, we'd actually worked on a bunch of really good ideas which we incorporated into *2112*."

"I had a great time making that record," continued Terry, "and I was extremely disappointed when it got the bad reviews and everyone was really down. It was a tough period, but looking back it was a tough time for the band just getting their feet planted on the ground. And it was a little too ambitious. In the record business, what we should have done was done a couple of covers, and made a really commercial record so we sort of grabbed a bigger market. But that's not what the boys wanted to do, and me neither. We had this crazy, cockamamie scheme that we could do original material and everyone would just flock to the stores and buy it. Well, it kinda backfired a bit there. But we made up for it with *2112* and never looked back after that."

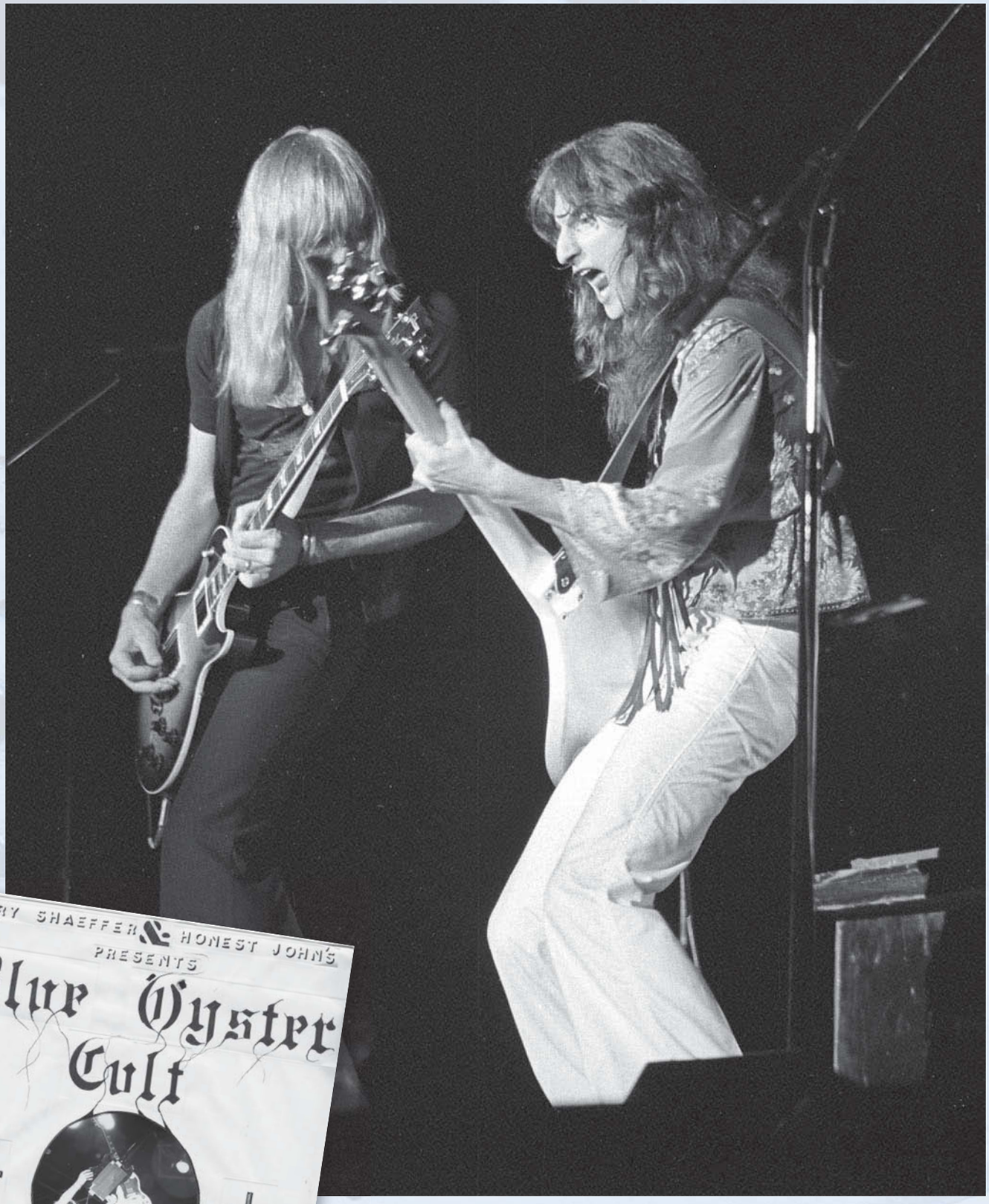


Above: Billboard ad issued by Mercury to congratulate its Juno Award Winners, April 12, 1975.

Left: Trade ad celebrating Canadian Polydor acts, 1975.



"Fly by Night" and "In the Mood" b/w "Something for Nothing," U.S. promo, 1976. *Ray Wawrzyniak collection*



July 1976. Tulsa-area photographer Rich Galbraith recalls that a "small riot" broke out when Mott the Hoople, who was scheduled to go on last despite their opener status, never took the stage.
Both © Rich Galbraith

Not only did "Lakeside Park" fizzle as a single, but "I Think I'm Going Bald" and fully all of the epic material—three-quarters of the album—sunk without a trace. And really, after all these years, only the flash of the blade "Bastille Day" has survived above the radar. Remarked Geddy: "*Caress of Steel* was a big experiment for us and we were very much in love with it when we finished up. But again, the forces that be, the people who promote our music, didn't believe in that album.

"It's kind of absurd; I mean, it's just where we were at," added Geddy. "We were a young band, a little pretentious, full of ambitions, full of grand ideas, and we wanted to see if we could make some of those grand ideas happen. And 'Fountain of Lamneth' was the first attempt at that. I think there are some beautiful moments, but a lot of it is ponderous and off the mark. It's also the most time we ever had to make a record. I think we had a full three weeks to make that record [laughs]. And we were just languishing, indulging ourselves, oodles of time. You know, *Fly by Night* was made in ten days. Now we had three weeks and there were a lot of funny aromas in the control room too [laughs]."

"Those were the growing years," Neil explained, asked about crazy songs like "Necromancer." "I often equate that to children's drawings on the refrigerator that hang around too long, you know? I really wish that they would just go away. I think we really started . . . wow, given my druthers, I would make our first album *Moving Pictures*. I can't think of a single reason not to do that!"

Ray Danniels figured that the instantly likeable first album had chalked up sales of around 100,000 units, and *Fly by Night*, 150,000, with *Caress of Steel* dropping back to the numbers of the debut. The tour receipts were even worse, with the band burning more cash to keep the show on the road, but getting smaller crowds. What started as a hopeful, proselytizing *Caress of Steel* campaign began to be known as the Down the Tubes tour.

One of Geddy's most telling remarks about the grind of the road (here at its nadir) was that it takes a little chunk out of your soul. Still, even if ordeals like the Down the Tubes tour can't help but harden a person, they can also be instructive and exciting.

"When you're a musician you don't have to choose from all of life's options, like what the hell am I going to do now?" Geddy explained to *Canadian Musician*'s Perry Stern in 1996. "You always know what you're going to do, so that takes care of the big questions. You're driven by your obsession. The first few years are difficult but you *believe*. You have ambition. Your physical makeup is different. Your recovery time is faster. You can sit in a car for four hundred miles, play a gig for twenty minutes opening for Sha Na Na or whatever, get back in the car and drive another four hundred miles. In the morning, you don't feel great but you don't feel that bad. You're just happy to be there. You're genuinely excited because you don't really believe you'll ever be 'there' again."

And that was a real possibility. Mercury was none too pleased with the career arc of the band and now was working *Caress of Steel* less enthusiastically on top of asking for hits if they were going to do this all over again. Money was tight, with Alex taking a job back home pumping gas and helping out his dad on plumbing jobs. Still, Rush's steadfast belief in their exploratory, proggy take on power trio hard rock meant that they weren't going to bend. And if that meant they lost their deal, so be it. The result was the band's surprise breakthrough album, *2112*, issued on April Fool's Day 1976, a record about as conceptual as *Caress of Steel* and arguably more so, given that the full concept side of it infected the

Courtesy Wyco Vintage/www.wycovintage.com

cover, title, and blurb text as well, maybe even the band's wardrobe choice on the back cover. Additionally, this album's side-long title track was positioned as side one, whereas "The Fountain of Lamneth" had been sequenced on side two.

"We never went into either of those two records with any doubt that they were going to be fabulous," recalled Terry Brown. "That was the way we did things there. It was like we were making a new record, great. So we'd start on it and we'd methodically work everything through, do all the preproduction, rehearsals and we would never over-rehearse anything. Most of the stuff was done in the studio." This statement, along with similar ones made by the boys in the band, conveys the idea that Rush was happy to be beholden to their muse, cheerfully blind to outside arguments about what they should be doing with their forty minutes of black plastic. Underscoring the sense that Rush was going to stick to their artistic convictions, Alex said, "We don't want to change what people think about rock 'n' roll. We just want to show them what we think about it."

"*2112* is a cycle of songs based on a development and progression of some things I see in society," Neil noted on the record's side-long Ayn Rand–inspired suite that nonetheless coughed up hitsy stand-alone rocker "The Temples of Syrinx." "We come across a lot of weirdness on the road and it comes out in the music. The cycle begins with an 'Overture,' then the discovery of the guitar and music. Guitars don't exist in the Solar Federation because the computers won't allow music—it's not logical. Then there's the 'Presentation,' where the hero brings his guitar to the priests in the temples of Syrinx. But the acolytes smash it up and send him away. And he has a dream about a planet, established simultaneously with the Solar Federation, where all the creative people went. He's never seen anything like it before, this alternative way of life; even the way they build their cities is totally different. And he gets more and more depressed because he realizes that his music is a part of that civilization and he can never be a part of it. But in the end he finds that the planet is real and things do change for him."

Peart's tale, with the essential message of individualism and self-reliance in the face of an oppressive government, was rendered iconically by Hugh Syme for the memorable cover art. (Syme, to his delight, also got to add a spot of Mellotron and synthesizer to the album.) The red star, reasonably mistaken for a pentagram, represents the dastardly Solar Federation, while the naked man on the version within the gatefold (to live on as one of the band's most used logo graphics) represented unadorned freedom, individuality, man without trappings.

"It's not like we're suffering from the dreaded Led Zep stigma," mused Neil, defending his literary aspirations. "We're essentially pursuing the same idea as them—playing rock 'n' roll but saying something too." Lightly complaining about rock crowds, Neil added, "We get frustrated when they're just out for a good time and we're not getting through. Our favorite audiences are the ones that sit and listen to the song and go wild afterward."

Yet the kids were indeed listening, with *2112* going gold a year and a half after issue, a huge kick up the establishment, an establishment that included their label, which would have wholeheartedly wanted something entirely not *2112*, as well as the critics, who saw in this band everything they hated, namely heavy metal, progressive rock, concept records, and an annoying vocalist.

Wrote Paul Nelson in *Circus*, "This star dreck is all about computers ruling the world and dictating our each and every joyless action—in other words, the same old science fiction shtick that has been done to death more times than *2001*. Seems this kid finds an electric guitar, but the priests of the future just won't sanction his musical ideas. Perhaps they're right—maybe he's a member of Rush. At any rate, surely they've heard it all before. So have you. *2112* would seem to be a product of the very computers it purports to want to destroy. Why wait when the future is already upon us? Here's a hammer."

So why did *2112* take off? Well, one might argue that progressive rock was at its peak, having grown to adulthood from its inception in 1970, a year that also incidentally marks the birth of metal. As well, FM had entered a golden period. It was not uncommon for DJs to play all of the title track in one large and uninterrupted meal of escapist stoner rock. Manager Ray Danniels also attributes the album's success to three other factors: (1) the steadfast belief the band had in their art, resulting in an album that even Mercury had to admit was objectively "good"; (2) the workable six-digit fan base built by the first three albums; and (3) the fact that *Caress of Steel* was toured unflaggingly, despite the blank stares from the few who showed up. Plus, once *2112* emerged, Rush hit the road just as hard, occasionally headlining and allowing for longer sets, all the more time for Rush to flex their musicianly muscles while simultaneously whisking their watchers away to lands fantastic.

All of this emphasis on taking it to the people was made material through the decision to make Rush's next record a double live album. *All the World's a Stage*, released on September 29, 1976, in all its triple gatefold glory, was yet another addition to the golden age of such records, joining Humble Pie's *Performance: Rockin' the Fillmore*, Kiss' *Alive!*, Blue Öyster Cult's *On Your Feet or on Your Knees*, and Peter Frampton's *Frampton Comes Alive!* as records that efficiently summarized catalogs, marked the end of an era, or otherwise helped careers thrive. A double live album meant a band had become part of the establishment. Adding flowery significance to the milestone, Rush recorded theirs at a music Mecca for any Toronto-raised musician—the venerable yet cozy Massey Hall—during the summer

Author collection

2112

Andrew Earles

Beginning around 1975, the continuing power shift from DJ to programmer and the influence of radio consulting teams defined a transitioning phase that soon created the dominating AOR format, which in turn became the ever-popular classic rock format during the '80s (and remains so to this day). The format that preceded AOR was known as *free-form*, or progressive rock, radio, and it is not to be confused with the genre of rock music, though no shortage of prog rock found its way into progressive rock FM programming. Remember, this was the mid-'70s; Rush's style of progressive/hard rock had only two ways to find success… radio and the live arena.

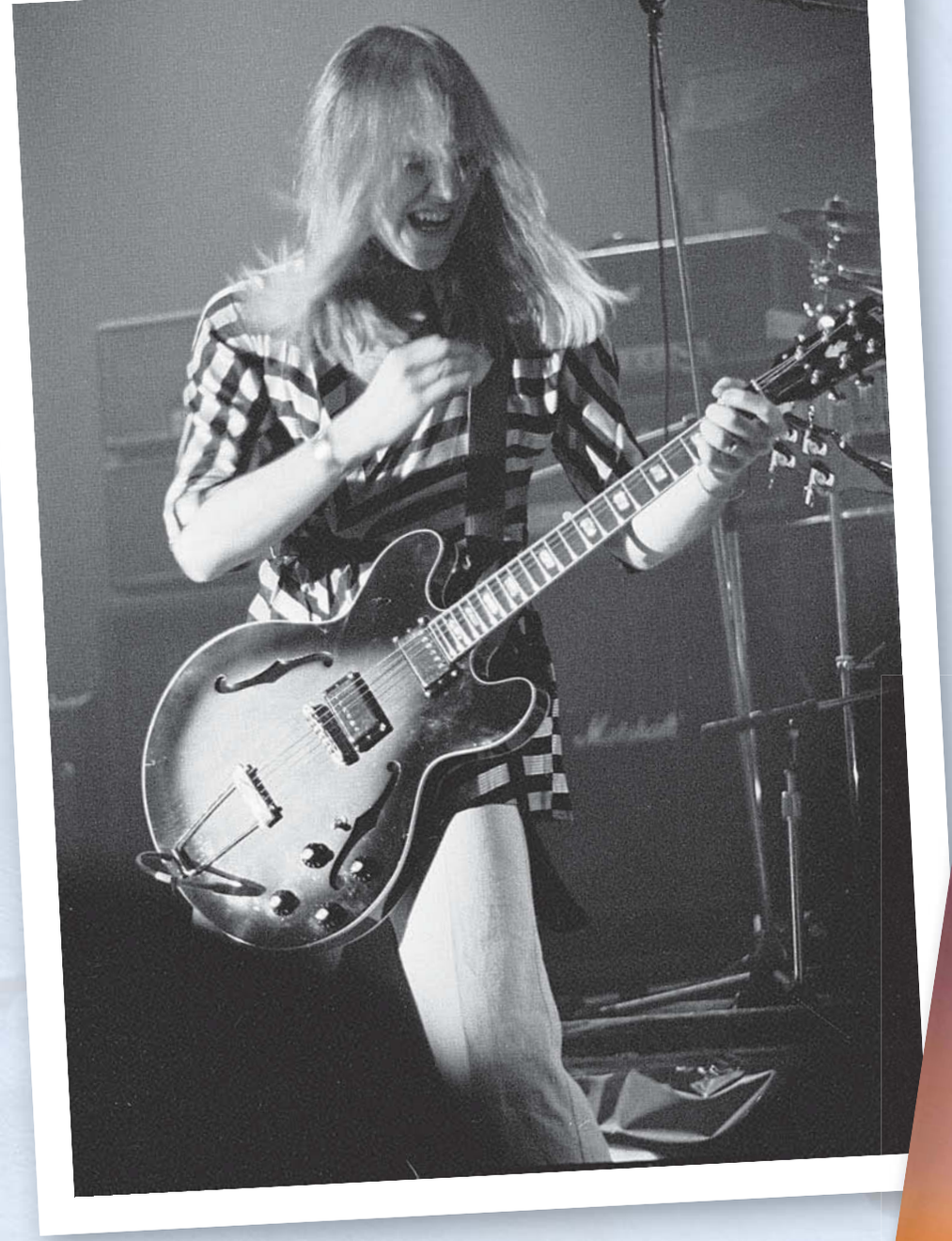
The failure of the lumbering *Caress of Steel* to produce any radio staples, combined with the aforementioned changes in the musical landscape, put Mercury Records in the position of pressuring the trio to forgo the side-long epics in favor of more succinct (i.e., radio-friendly) songs. But this was a band on a hell of a hot streak: *2112* would be their fourth full-length album in a space of two years, and the band was probably indifferent to label pressures, as they took a few months to write and record what is justifiably seen as their first masterpiece, complete with the side-one-spanning title track and an overall prog-rock heaviness that ranked alongside King Crimson's *Red* (1974) and much of the prog-metal weirdness offered by Budgie during the same era.

Now, it doesn't hurt matters that *2112* turned out to be the first Rush album to perform commercially, landing in the *Billboard* Top 100 upon release. This proved that road-dogging it and releasing three solid-to-great albums within a year and a half had initiated a homegrown and very loyal fan base that had very little to do with airplay (barring the breakout success of "Working Man" in Cleveland, Ohio, that got the band off to their start outside of Canada).

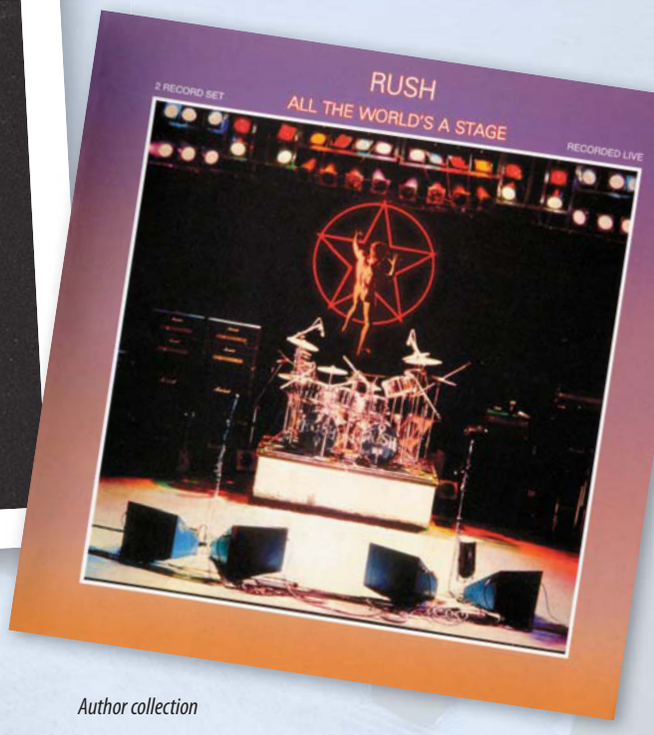
The title track featured dynamics and hooks that the more challenging *Caress of Steel* lacked in terms of stretched-out endeavors. This resulted in the first two movements of "2112," "Overture" and "The Temples of Syrinx," being released as a single. Additionally, side two's opener ("A Passage to Bangkok") was given the single treatment, and both releases gained some radio real estate. Despite their respective moments of quiet introspection (via acoustic guitar, mainly), these two songs are among Rush's heaviest endeavors, yet each showcases an unprecedented catchiness in songwriting skill that attracted a slew of new fans while doing the rest of the album justice in keeping early metalheads happy.

"2112," the title track, taken as a whole, could be the thematic as well as sonic *no* in response to Mercury Records' stylistic requests. Inspired by the writings of Ayn Rand (as per Neil Peart's liner notes), this introductory half of the album paints a very *1984*-ish future world complete with a tyrannical ruling presence that controls all forms of art. In the year 2062, an interplanetary war sets up the protagonist's discovery of an "ancient" guitar and the self-taught creative feats that result. The powers-that-be destroy the guitar, and the protagonist goes into hiding and then commits suicide, but all of this somehow ends up launching further turmoil that topples the entities in power, thrusting the world back into its pre-Draconian state.

2112, depending on which big-picture assessment one chooses, marked either the end of Rush's first sonic and aesthetic incarnation or the initiation of phase two, which Rush would ride with increasing success for the remainder of the 1970s and until their next line of demarcation: 1981's *Moving Pictures*. Most likely, both assessments are correct.



All the World's a Stage tour, Expo Square Pavilion, Tulsa, Oklahoma, January 16, 1977.
© Rich Galbraith



Author collection

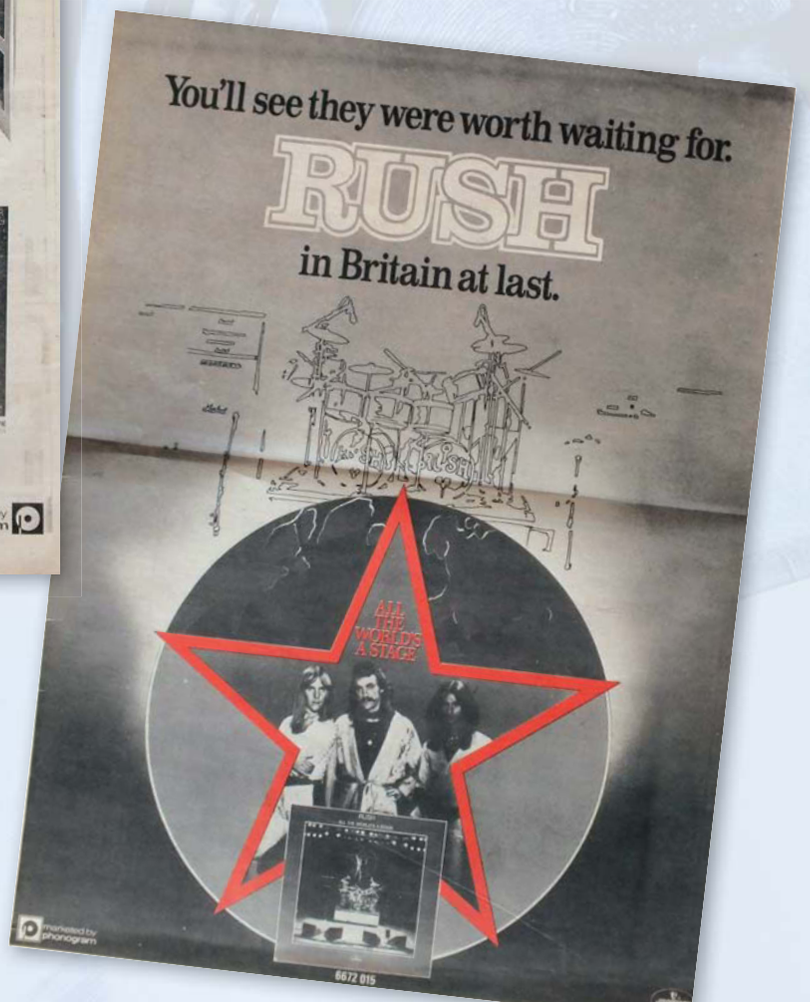
of '76 (which also saw Geddy marrying Nancy after seven years together). Indeed, Geddy had promised to his mother that playing Massey Hall would be the marker that the band had truly arrived.

With respect to its track list, *All the World's a Stage* delivers, unsurprisingly, a healthy chunk of *2112*. *Caress of Steel* and *Fly by Night* get short shrift, with the beloved self-titled debut winning the day, allowing fans to hear these more conventional hard rock songs gussied up by Peart and his acutely tuned tom-toms. Down this tack, Rush presents a side four comprising the first album's three heaviest metallers, including, of course, a swooping, dramatic version of "Working Man," the song that got it all started back in Cleveland a short and action-packed two years earlier.

"It was frustrating," Lee explained on the press trail for the double live set, recapping the band's struggle. "We were turned down by all the Canadian recording companies. We tried to hitch up on cross-Canada tours with major groups, but were always being told Rush had no commercial potential—that was their favorite phrase. Since then it's been

tour, tour, tour. We've played hundreds of American towns supporting whoever we could. We figured Canada would come naturally. It's all starting to come together this year. *2112* was given good promotion by Mercury, and the USA tour was timed perfectly. All our past records are still selling. We don't seem to be a singles band. Mercury first signed us, thinking we'd have a string of hits like Bachman-Turner Overdrive. We had to fight for the thematic idea of *2112*. But since *2112* was released, Mercury's given us a great deal of support. We've shown that musicians from Toronto could go to the USA and make it—record companies are now aware of that. It's possible to be successful outside of your own back yard."

"With *2112*, we felt we had reached a first plateau," figured Neil. "We had realized the goals we set for ourselves before the second album. Musically, it looked like a logical place to do a live album. We had four albums' worth of material honed down to a live show. And the record company was hot for a live album. When we play a piece live, we add all our little quirks to it. It grows; our older material shows a remarkable progression. Some of the old songs have developed until they're superior to the originals. This gives us a chance to bring them up to date. We always felt there was something happening live that didn't come across on record. Now we have the opportunity to capture that essence of the band. Also, *All the World's a Stage* presents our material to people who may have heard or liked a couple of our songs, but never got into all our albums. Now they can have those songs together on one album without our having to put out a Best of Rush package."

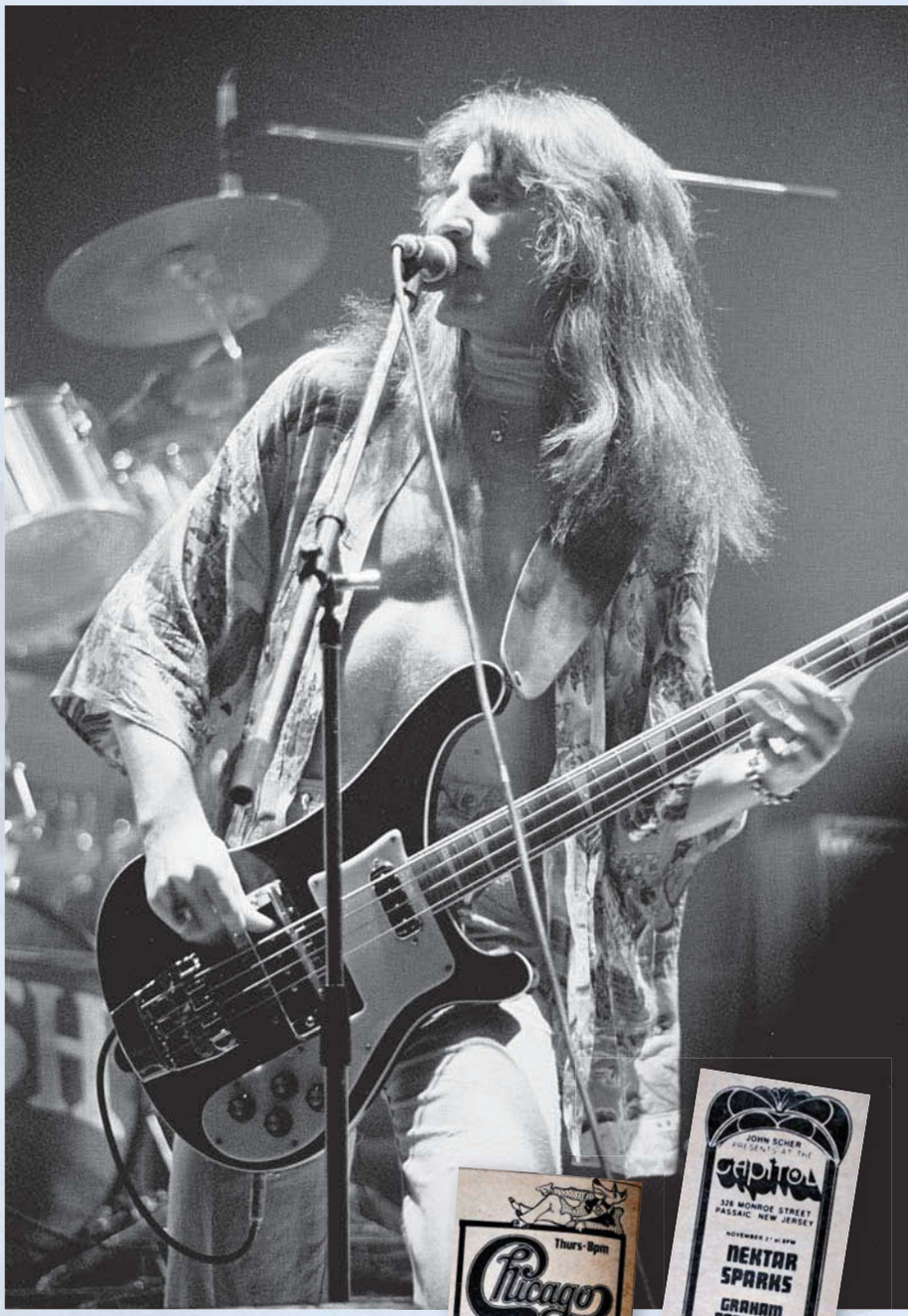


Above: New Musical Express ad, December 12, 1976. *Author collection*

Right: Melody Maker ad, June 18, 1977. *Author collection*

Looking back, Neil reflected, "The first time the three of us got together there seemed to be an understanding. We wanted to achieve the same goals. Up until that time, there wasn't that seriousness. We realized that there are a lot of issues contingent to being a musician, a lot of choices to be made. That was when everything became professional. There was money in five figures involved. Most of the material on the first album had existed for five years—the band had played it around bars and high schools in Ontario. But with the second album, we wrote the material specifically for the album. All of us are admirers of the English progressive wave. We looked at the roots we had, which was hard rock music. But we decided that there was a lot more we could do with it. We decided that what we wanted to do was a combination of progressive music and hard rock. I think we finally achieved that with the last album. The softer things and the harder things seem to have more continuity. C*aress of Steel* and *Fly by Night* were more experimental. So now it's time for us to set new goals."

Neil closed with an affirmation of the band's belief in their art, a belief that had translated into a record philosophically and stylistically similar to *Caress of Steel* but somehow *better*, a palpable difference that had taken *2112* to sales of about 250,000 by the September 1976 release of the live album, which, of course, further invigorated sales of *2112*, not to mention those of the band's previous three albums. In fact, *All the World's a Stage* would be certified gold in not much more than a year. "I just re-read Ayn Rand's novel *The Fountainhead* for the first time in years," he said, "and I'm relating it to the music business. It deals with corruption of the spirit. A lot of people outside music have no idea how much corruption there is under the shell. I like to feel that we're doing our part to change that through our music. And so far, we've managed to justify our ideals to the people in the music business—and they're the ones that count, because they're the ones in a position to hurt us."



All the World's a Stage tour, Expo Square Pavilion, Tulsa, Oklahoma, January 16, 1977. *© Rich Galbraith*

Print ads, 1976. *Both John T. Comerford III collection/Frank White Photo Agency*

"Individualism, concepts of thought and morality are causes that we believe in. We all know that boogie is definitely the philosophy of the '70s. Everybody is out there for a fast buck. The Aerosmiths give birth to groups like Starz. It has become OK to say that you're only in rock 'n' roll for the money. We've tried to transcend that by having something for everyone. We don't ask that everyone believe in what we do. Let them take our stuff on any level they want." —Geddy Lee, quoted by Darcy Diamond, *Creem*, 1977

1977–1980

TIDE POOLS & HYPERSPACE

ONE BOX RUSH WOULD NEVER TICK, unlike bands like Deep Purple or Iron Maiden, was "Band of the World"—surprising, given the rich and inquisitive world travel the guys have pursued in their time away from rock. While some exotic countries would get to see their heroes in later years (there's a great fondness for the South American swing), in the early days one trip to Japan was the extent of their non-Western explorations.

Tighter to home, this, incredibly, was a proudly Canadian band that until recently had never toured much of Canada outside of their home province of Ontario, resulting in a fair bit of patriotic resentment from spurned Canucks. Prescient and wise this strategy turned out to be, however, given that most observers pretty much agree that what made the band successful was their incessant and unflagging hitting and re-hitting of B markets across the United States, while not neglecting bigger cities either.

Recording *Permanent Waves*, Le Studio, Morin Heights, Quebec, October 1979.
Fin Costello/Redferns/Getty Images

Print ad, Philadelphia, March 11, 1977. *John T. Comerford III collection/Frank White Photo Agency*

All the World's a Stage tour, Fort Wayne, Indiana.

cities either.

"The strategy was, 'There's a gig. We'll go play it,'" said Geddy. "If you look at our routing plans for those first four years, it was totally nonsensical. One time we went from Gainesville, Florida, straight up to Allentown, Pennsylvania."

Added Ray Danniels, "We went everywhere we could. I was always more concerned with the cities we hadn't played than the ones we had. My philosophy was, if you can drive to it, do it. It was the drive-'til-you-die philosophy."

This meant that despite the high-flown concepts of the band's side-long epics, Rush was seen as a people's band, built by fan word of mouth in opposition to critics, who were, in the main, unfavorable, sometimes reasonably so ("pretentious," "vocals that could strip paint"), but more likely just annoyingly off-base ("just a boogie band," "You've heard it all before," "derivative," "Led Zeppelin clone").

While half the world could only listen to the records, Europe got regular visits from Rush, with the U.K., in particular, becoming somewhat of a friendly home away. Perhaps the most significant indication of this was the decision to record the band's follow-up to *2112* there, at the venerable Rockfield Studios in Wales.

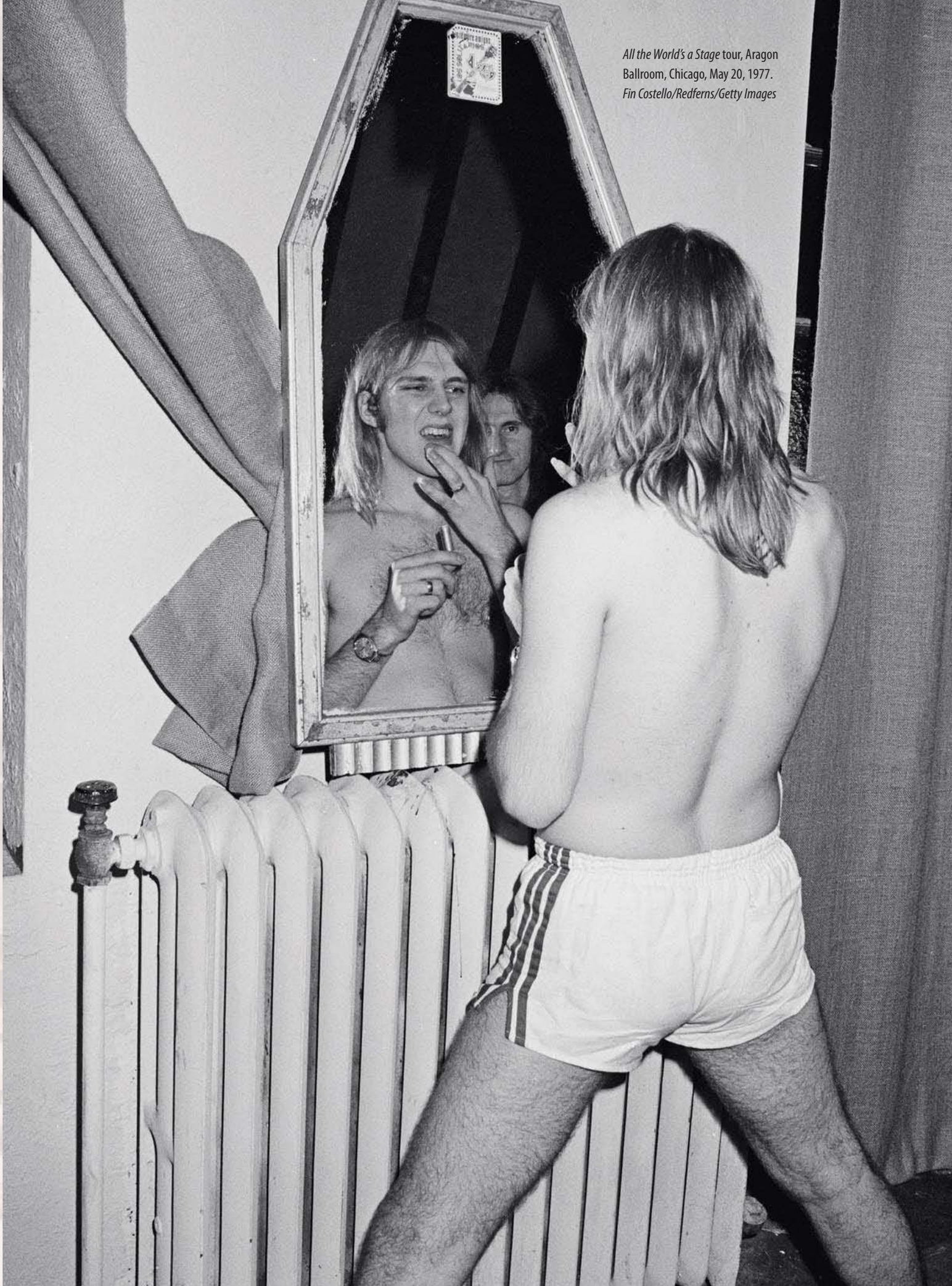
"The next album will be recorded in England," Geddy told *Circus*' Deb Frost in early 1977. "It will be a natural progression, though not a major concept like *2112*. We've always looked up to the English progressive bands and it's gonna be a good opportunity to go over there and try to capture the same sort of atmosphere. We're also expanding what we can play. We're getting into more instruments, there will be more texture. We would never forsake our hard rock framework, though! We'll just update it. A lot of bands underestimate their audience. But if you look at the very big bands with longevity, they've grown and progressed and their audiences have grown and progressed with them. We're not looking for immediate results; we're hoping to be around for years and years."

Instrumentation also would expand. "I'm just now learning to play keyboard percussion, which involves the whole field of tubular and orchestra bells," Neil noted. "I've been practicing and working at them for the past few months. I'm hoping soon to acquire new drums with a whole set of keyboard percussion. I use sets of tube cowbells, melodic tom-toms, and sets of chimes to get a different sound.

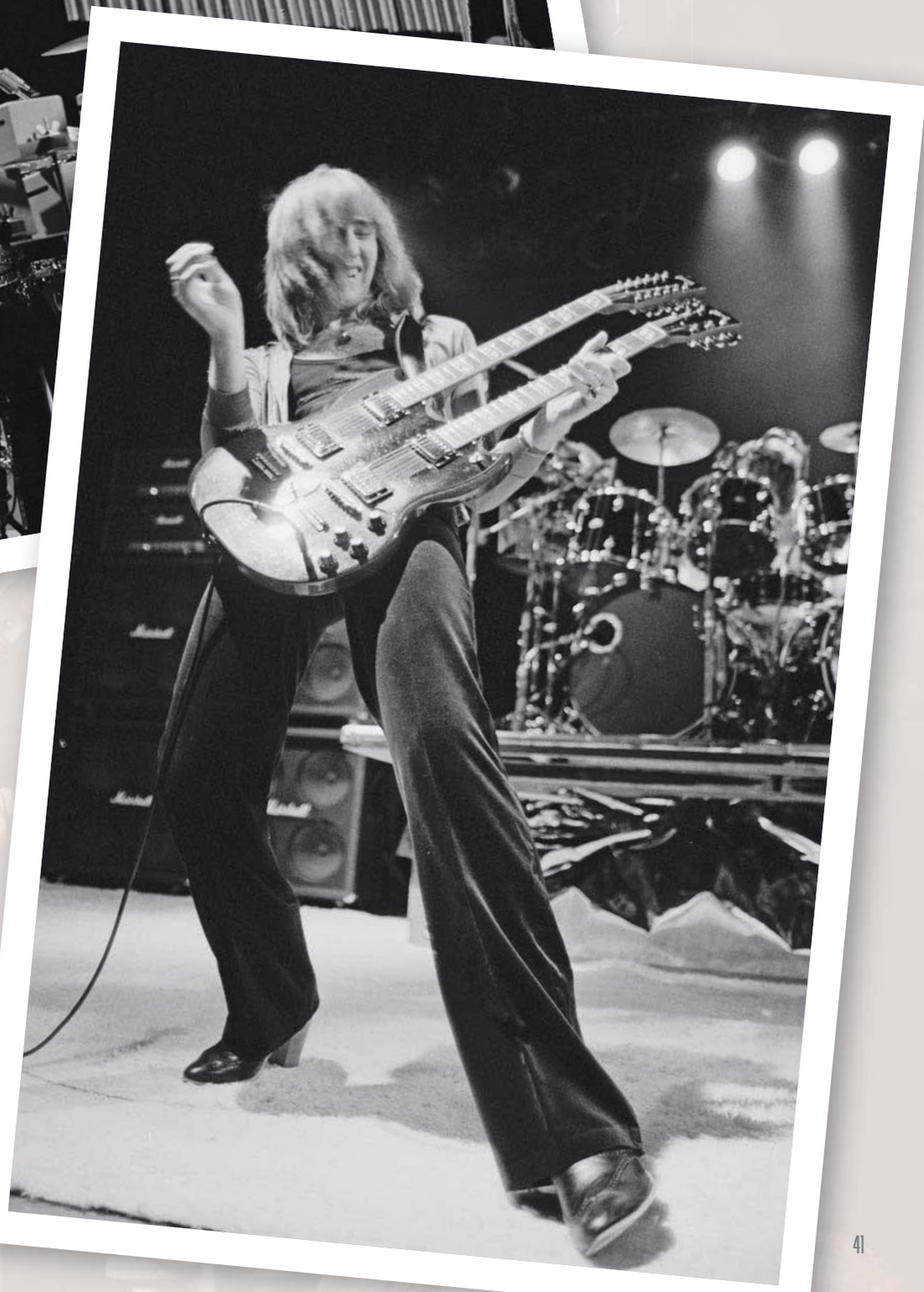
"We don't want to stop at any particular plateau," continued Peart. "We were faced with the choice of adding a band member or else getting really ambitious and doing it ourselves. We want more textures, new sounds. Constantly, new sounds and new textures have to be brought into our music to make it grow."

Implicit in this was that Mercury was no longer sending its want list through to Danniels, who would filter label directives onto the cabal of three, or perhaps first through Terry Brown, during one of their prerecording lunches. The success of *2112* had quelled any notions that anybody was going to influence the creative decisions made by Neil, Geddy, and Alex.

Author collection



All the World's a Stage tour, Aragon Ballroom, Chicago, May 20, 1977.
Fin Costello/Redferns/Getty Images



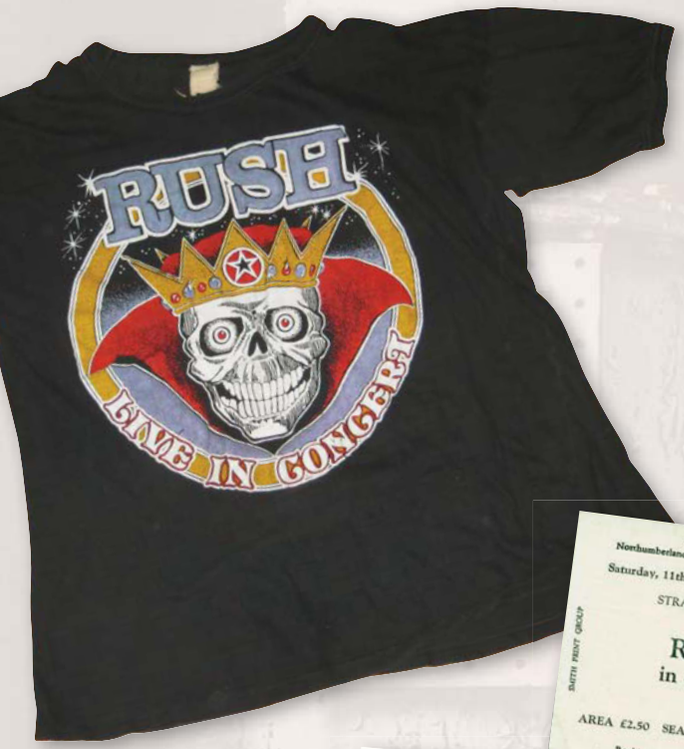
A Farewell to Kings tour, Public Auditorium, Cleveland, Ohio, December 17, 1977.
Fin Costello/Redferns/Getty Images

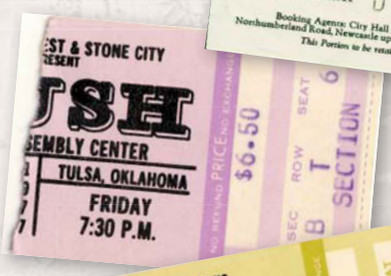
"Closer to the Heart" b/w "Madrigal," U.S., 1977. *Ray Wawrzyniak collection*

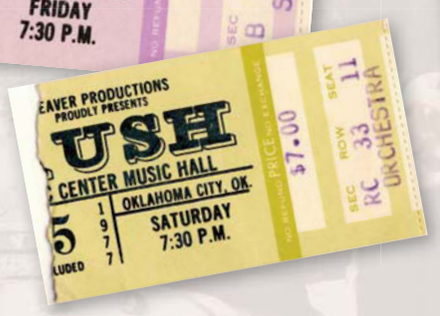
"For us, the most frustrating thing in the world is being told what to do," noted Lee in a chat with Scott Cohen from *Circus*. "We feel we know what we're doing. We know our music and how it should be presented to the world. We know who we're trying to appeal to and we know us—and there's no one who knows us better than us. That's why we have an excellent manager—because he understands us and exactly what we're trying to do. He doesn't touch us. He just lets us do what we want to do. He takes what we've done and tries to present it to the world in a way that he believes we would want it presented."

A Farewell to Kings, released on September 1, 1977, was a crazy, complex album of electrified power trio prog. From all of side one, namely the title track and eleven minutes of "Xanadu," through "Cinderella Man" and "Cygnus X-1," Rush proposed a Mensa metal future, Alex stacking riff upon riff on top of odd time signatures barely contained by complex bass and drums in precision unison. The subtle shift versus the past catalog (in addition to the plush instrumentation) was that there were fewer heavy songs and light songs recognizable as somewhat traditionally structured, with heavy and light battling it out throughout the many passages of *each* piece, with even shorter tracks such as "A Farewell to Kings" (mostly driving, heavy) and "Cinderella Man" (progressive folk rock?) unfolding as epics stuffed with angular art rock performances.

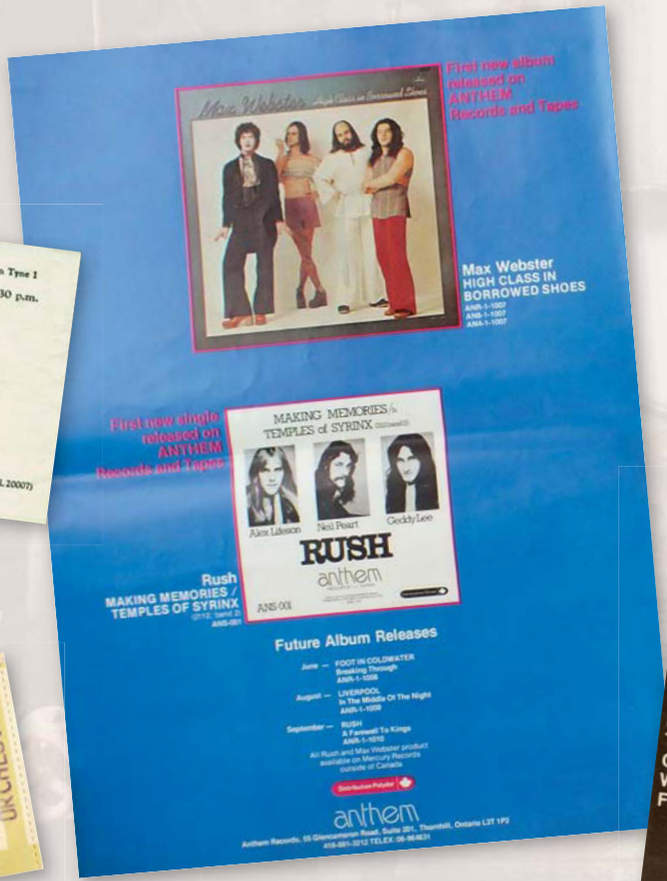
Geddy's assessment of the Rush sound at this juncture was reductive, to say the least. "People invariably ask us why Rush is happening in the midst of all this talk about punk rock," he mused. "And I tell them it's because we're bringing the rock audience something they desperately want to hear—good, loud, entertaining rock 'n' roll. We don't play down to our audiences. Our success is built on them. They are friends who helped us out when we needed it."







October 14–15, 1977. *Rich Galbraith collection*



Both author collection

A FAREWELL TO KINGS

Gary Graff

It was a pivotal moment when Rush hit Rockfield Studios in Monmouth, Wales, in 1977 to begin work on its fifth studio album.

With 1976's *2112*, Rush had taken its tight guitar-bass-drums lineup—which the *Rolling Stone Record Guide* coined "British space rock without keyboards"—to its natural limit, and it put an enthusiastic cap on that era with the roaring live album *All the World's a Stage*. It was time for some change—and it didn't take much to achieve that.

The first sounds we hear on *A Farewell to Kings*' title track is Alex Lifeson playing classical acoustic guitar, more crucially followed by Geddy Lee's Minimoog, the aforementioned missing element that had kept Rush on the hard rock or heavy metal side of the dividing line from prog. But with a few flicks of synthesizer keys alongside Lifeson's delicate pattern, Rush signaled the arrival of a fresh sensibility that took the band into a new space.

Produced by Rush and Terry Brown, the group's cohort since *Fly by Night*, *A Farewell to Kings* was Rush's first album to be certified gold in the United States (it subsequently went platinum), and it peaked at a then career high No. 33 on the *Billboard* 200. It also gave the group its first real hit in the States with "Closer to the Heart."

Some of this, of course, was simply the result of building momentum; Rush was on a roll, particularly after *2112*, and whatever the group did next was bound to score. But besides the sonic additions, *A Farewell to Kings* also housed some of Rush's most ambitious and adventurous material, challenging tracks that showcased the trio's individual and collective virtuosity but still had plenty of heart and compositional integrity.

Take, for instance, the title track, a six-minute thrill ride whose gentle introduction builds into a ringing, majestic melody that, in turn, shifts to a bare-bones instrumental breakdown with Lifeson, Lee, and Neal Peart jousting with spiraling intensity. "Cinderella Man," a rare occasion when Lee wrote lyrics (based on the Frank Capra film *Mr. Deeds Goes to Town*) has many of the same virtues, while the brief interlude "Madrigal" lets Lifeson showcase his acoustic acumen. As does "Closer to the Heart," which begins as gentle folk rock and builds into a soaring, anthemic rocker, covering a lot of ground in less than three minutes.

A Farewell to Kings' centerpiece, however, is "Xanadu," an eleven-minute suite inspired by *Citizen Kane* that makes extensive use of synthesizers and Peart's expanded percussion arsenal, including tubular bells, wind chimes, and wood temple blocks. Lee adds a lower register to his typically high-pitched banshee vocals, and the song also gives Lifeson plenty of playing room, whether he's providing ambient shimmer or stinging solos. Rush's ability to pull the intricate piece off live made it an enduring concert favorite that's among the most requested whenever the trio tours.

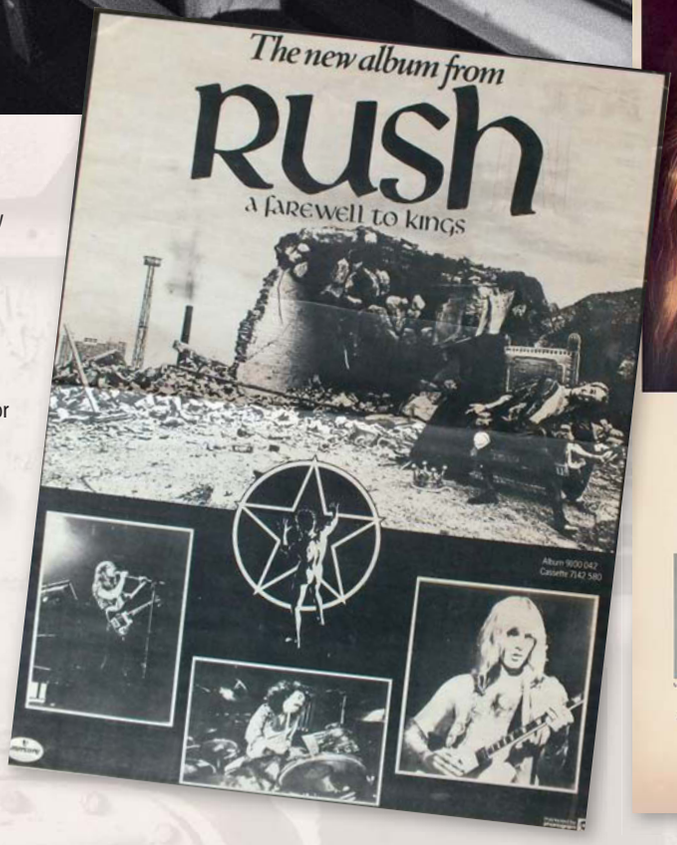
The album-closing "Cygnus X-1 Book I: The Voyage" is less successful, though. It certainly has the flash that Rush excels at, but it comes off as unfocused and incomplete, perhaps because the rest—and, really, the meat—of the story was waiting for the following year's *Hemispheres*.

But that momentary disappointment hardly impacts on the importance of *A Farewell to Kings*. This was the beginning of the rest of Rush's career, opening a musical vision that would only broaden and deepen as time moved on.

Alex swaps the bridge pickup on his Les Paul backstage at the Birmingham Odeon during the English leg of the *A Farewell to Kings* tour, February 12, 1978. *Fin Costello/Redferns/Getty Images*

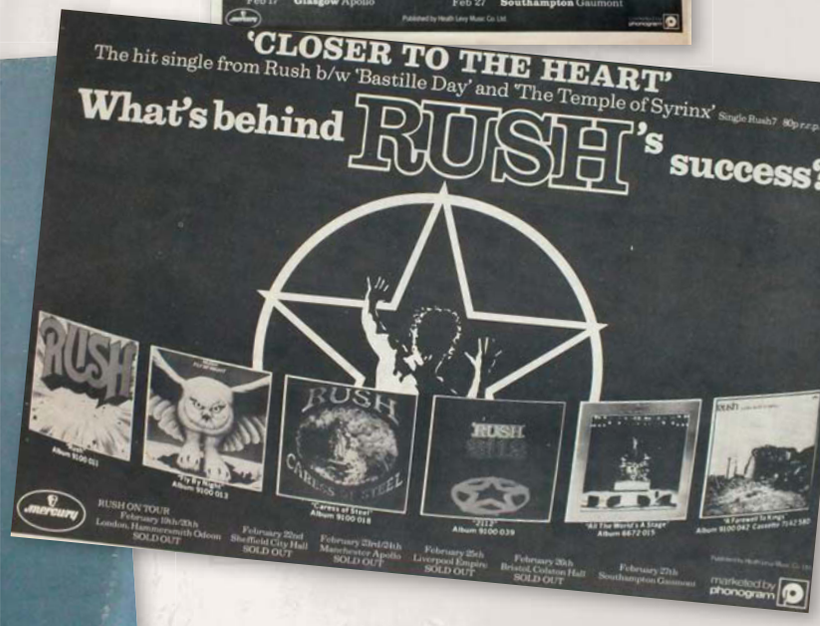
Right: Melody Maker ad, September 10, 1977. *Author collection*

Far right: Billboard ad touting Rush's Juno Award for Group of the Year, April 29, 1978.



"The live album was a creative hiatus and I think the new album definitely demonstrates how important it was to us," reflected Neil in conversation with *Georgia Straight*'s Tom Harrison. "We needed the time not to think about writing material but think about ourselves as musicians. We wanted to work on the instruments we played naturally and expand to play the new ones, to play two instruments at one time on stage. We needed to expand our sound because we felt constricted by the end of *2112*. We knew we had to do something. The live album gave us that time to make the necessary changes without adding the obvious fourth man, which would've been taking the easy way out. We saw that we had to go for something really big."

Although up-tempo ballad "Closer to the Heart" would become the band's biggest radio hit yet, the element of continuity from *2112* through the current and the following two albums would be represented by the fantasy worlds within "Xanadu" and the science/science fiction of "Cygnus X-1." As Neil noted on the latter, basically a supposition upon black holes, "My favorite [explanation] is that it's a crack in our dimension, our universe, our plane, and it leads to something different. I read a *Scientific American* article dealing with the same thing, but from another point of view. It's black globules forming from dust and gas and particles that are eventually going to become a star. Science fiction is just an opening to our imagination. I think that's science fiction at its best: it throws your imagination wide open. There's no limit."

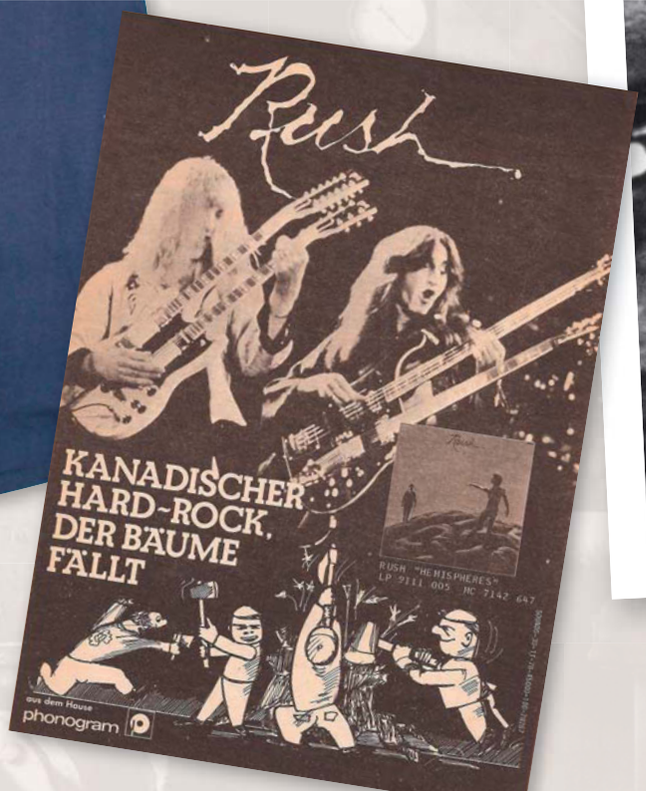


Issued in April 1978, *Archives* was a straightforward repackaging of the first three Rush albums. The U.S. issue has a gray cover; the Canadian issues sport gray and black covers. *All author collection*

Skeptical as to the function of hit singles, Neil added, "We're remaining philosophical about 'Closer to the Heart.' We'd all like to see it as a single and see it do well, but we've had ten hit singles already that didn't go anywhere. That doesn't hurt us. We've got everything we need, really. I remember my frustration as a young musician dealing with people who said you can't do anything without a hit single, yet I knew all my life it wasn't true. That's the evil thing that's always brought me down. I faced that kind of enmity, that negative thinking. But all you have to do is be prepared to work and work hard all the time. If you're really into it, it's not bad at all. We really enjoy it, and even though we really don't need to now and can level off, we're still going off on a seven-week tour."

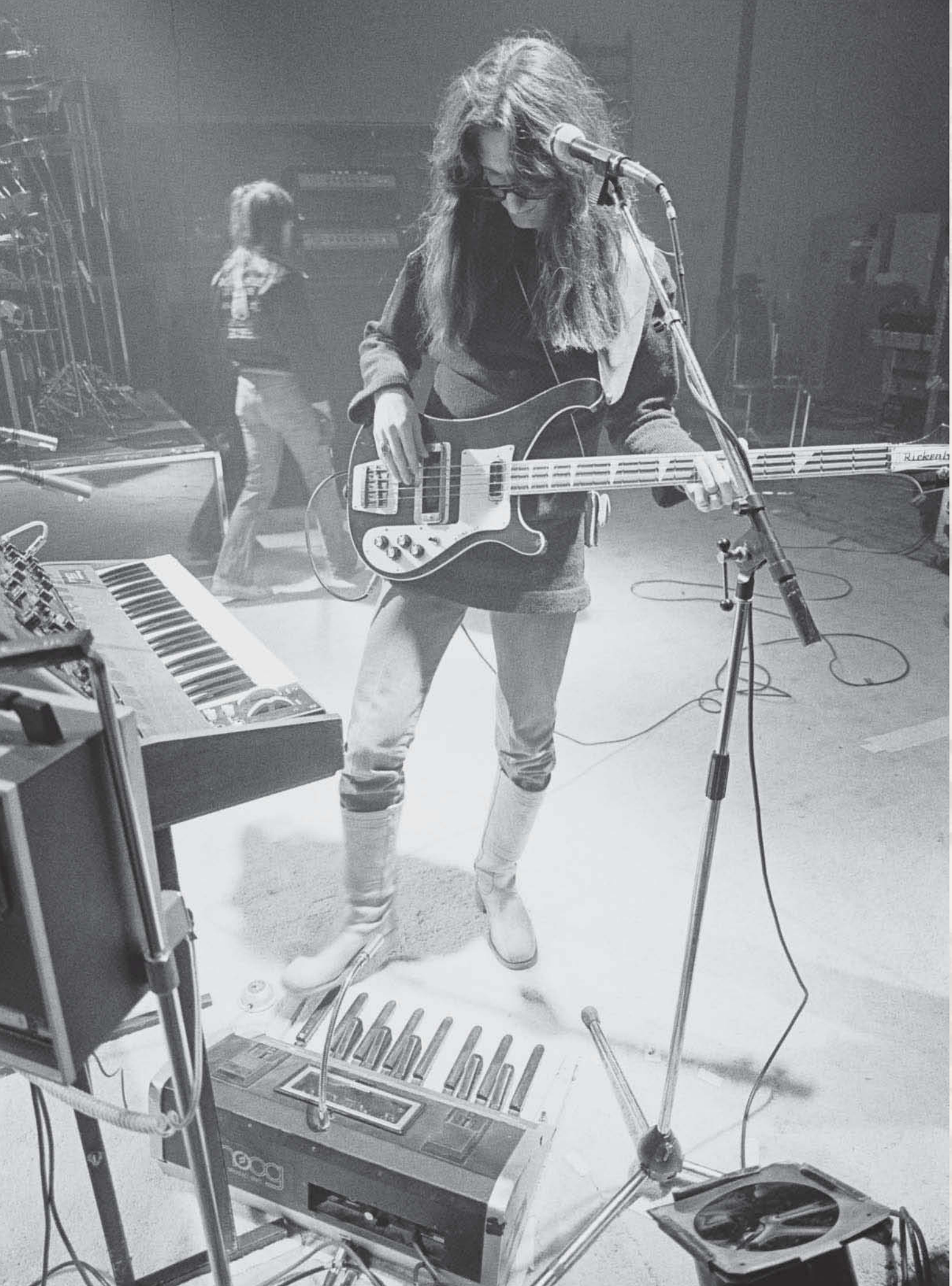
A Farewell to Kings would attain U.S. gold certification two months after its release, Rush also receiving its gold awards for *2112* and *All the World's a Stage* on the same day. Against popular myth, prog continued to thrive and make real creative gains through the spit of punk, while the sleeping giant of metal simultaneously stirred, especially in the U.K., which would provide us with the New Wave of British Heavy Metal (NWOBHM) two years hence. Rush was an exotic cousin from far off that was welcome into both solitudes, *A Farewell to Kings* galvanizing the band's fan base on British shores, a love affair furthered through the decision by the trio to return to Wales through June and July 1978 for the follow-up to *Farewell*.

Courtesy Wyco Vintage/www.wycovintage.com



German ad, 1978. *Ray Wawrzyniak collection*

A Farewell to Kings tour, Birmingham Odeon, Birmingham, England, February 12, 1978.
Fin Costello/Redferns/Getty Images


moog

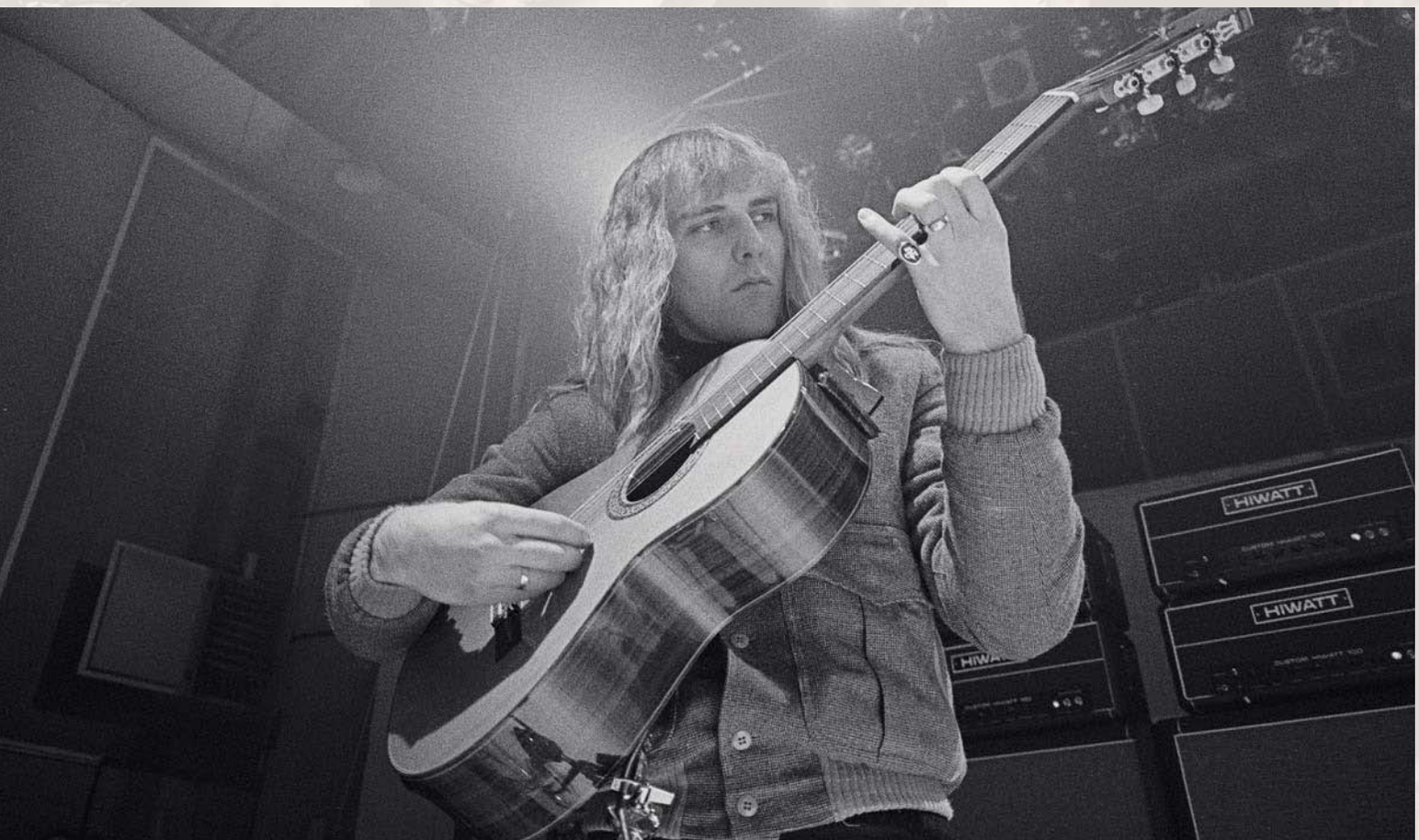
Hemispheres, issued October 28, 1978, would be the album that nearly killed the band. The workload at Rockfield was enormous, the arrangement, performance, and production standards daunting, all at enormous cost, exacerbated by having to mix at Advision and remix at Trident Studios in London, having run out of time at the first place. But the meter had been running long before mixing, given that the guys had chosen to write the album in England, setting up shop in a farmhouse down the road from Rockfield. To add to the stress, Geddy found out too late in the game to make changes that the songs were in registers that required him to sing higher and harder than ever before (also away from Rockfield, at Advision), which made constructing this labyrinth of a record difficult, and playing it live even more difficult.

Whereas five shorter songs were on *2112* and four on *Farewell*, Hemispheres offered a scant pair: "Circumstances," a roiling hard rocker with nods to Canada's bilingual reality, and "The Trees," an amusing tale that results in union certification for the maples against the oaks, "definitely to be looked at with a smile cracked," said Geddy. The latter would become a concert favorite, as would the ten-minute instrumental "La Villa Strangiato," Rush's most complex song to date. Similar to *2112*, side one of *Hemispheres* (issued on red vinyl in Canada) was dominated by a massive epic so complicated of performance and storyline that the band couldn't figure out what to call it, going with "Hemispheres" on the record's center label and "Cygnus X-1 Book II: Hemispheres" on the back cover.

Billboard ad, October 21, 1978.

Opposite: Working the Minimoog at Shepperton Studios, Surrey, England, December 2, 1978. *Fin Costello/Redferns/Getty Images*

Below: Shepperton Studios, Surrey, England, December 2, 1978. *Fin Costello/Redferns/Getty Images*



HEMISPHERES

Daniel Bukszpan

In 1973, Yes released *Tales from Topographic Oceans*, a two-record set consisting of four twenty-minute extended epics based on the Shastric scriptures. Listening to it is a great experience, provided your idea of fun entails subjecting yourself to 83 very long minutes of dentistry-grade suffering.

Rush's 1978 album *Hemispheres* has its own twenty-minute epic, and it stood a good chance of falling victim to *Topographic Oceans* Syndrome. Luckily, total disaster was averted. It's only a single disc, and its second half contains some actual songs, so on balance it gets away with a passing grade.

Rush had created album-side-length epics twice before, with 1976's *2112* representing one of their finest recorded moments. Maybe they thought a third trip to the well would yield fruit once again. What they came up with, however, was "Cygnus X-1 Book II," and it simply doesn't work.

The song is not without its moments, but they add up to five or so minutes of cool riffs and impressive drumming, none of which hangs together coherently, much less deserves to hang around for eighteen minutes. The end result is a jumbled slog that only the most masochistic Rush fan would listen to repeatedly, and only because he believes that he doesn't like it because he doesn't get it.

Flipping the record over clears all the cobwebs, and it's here that *Hemispheres* becomes a worthwhile listen. Side two kicks off with "Circumstances," a short, smart song whose effect is that of a cup of strong coffee after a pot hangover. It's based around a labyrinthine chord pattern and a catchy chorus that features what may be the highest-pitched Geddy Lee vocal ever committed to tape.

"Circumstances" is followed by "The Trees," an all-time classic that firmly separated the Rush diehards from the casual fans. Listeners for whom Lee's voice had not been a total deal breaker found themselves unable to tolerate the lyrics, which concern oaks and maples jockeying for political position in the forest. By the time the trees were all made equal by hatchet, axe, and saw, many fair-weather fans had probably started listening to Blondie.

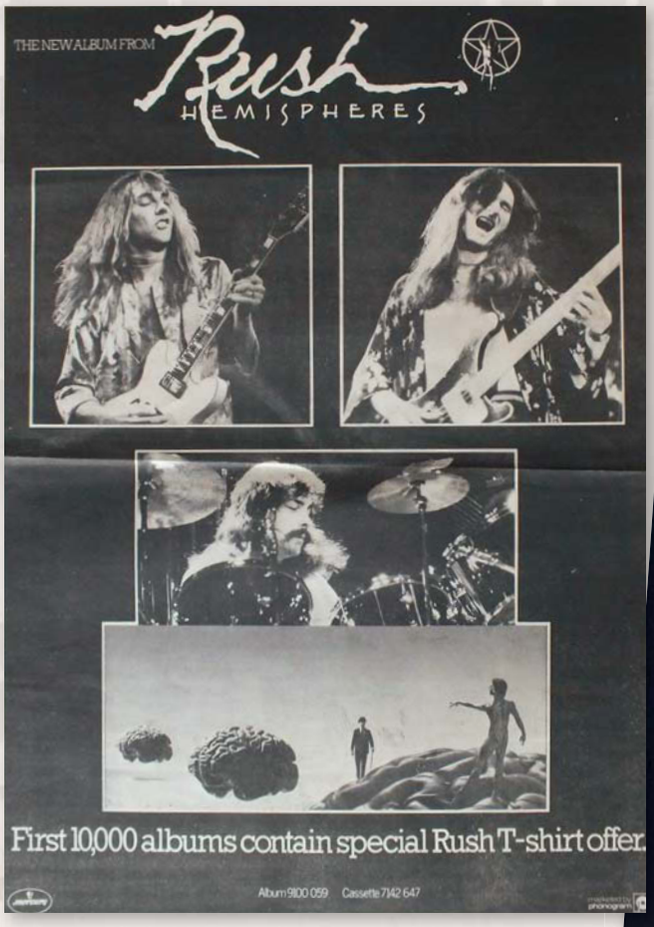
The album closes with the instrumental epic "La Villa Strangiato." It hangs together as one unified piece, something "Cygnus X-1 Book II" couldn't manage, and ends on a definitive full stop. This was an appropriate choice, as Rush would never flirt with *Topographic Oceans* Syndrome again.

The next time anyone would hear from Lee, Lifeson, and Peart on record would be 1980's *Permanent Waves* album, which opened with the vibrant fireworks of "Spirit of Radio." A new decade was underway, and there would be a new way of doing things. Rush would still create extended pieces, traffic in sequels, and commit egregious lyrical overreaches, but never again would they do them with the same navel-gazing inattention to craft as they did on the first half of *Hemispheres*.

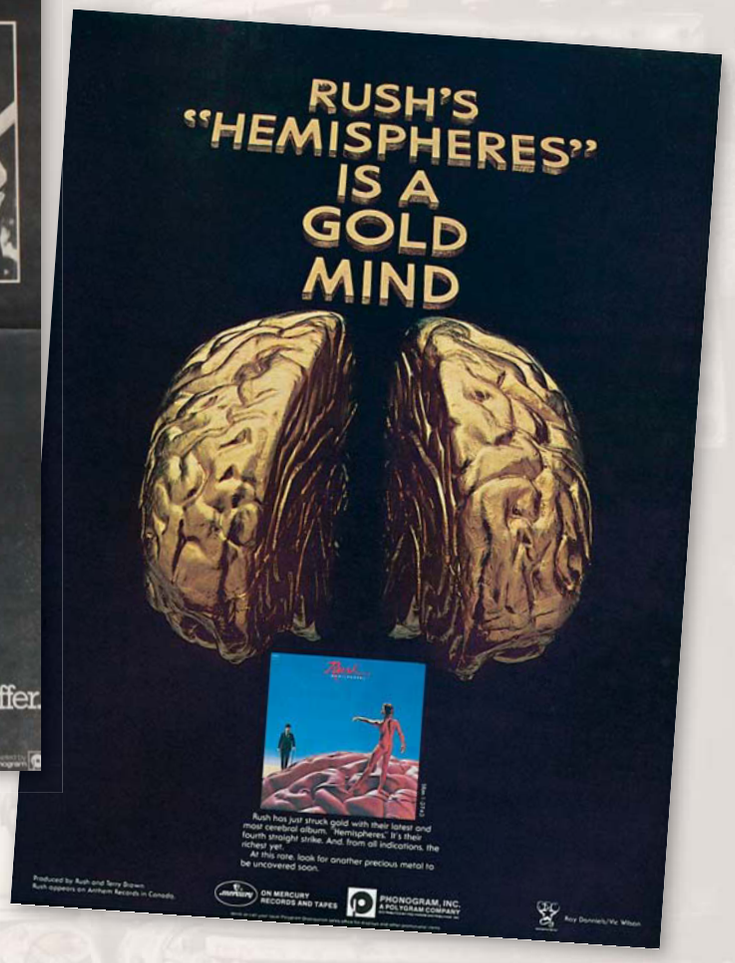
"It was too long to do in one take, because it wouldn't go on a piece of tape," recalled Terry Brown. "So we had to do it in sections, and then we would get the section and find a convenient place where we could actually pause, stop, and then we'd go back and we'd start recording again and do the next eight or ten minutes. And then we put it all together. It's a long piece and obviously, they can play it. But you have to remember that we were developing a lot of the nuances and parts and details at the time we were recording. Now, in hindsight, they can go back and listen to it, and it's imbedded now, they know every nuance and note. But at the time, we were developing. To develop the whole piece in one go, certainly for me was a challenge that I wasn't really up for. I needed to make sure that we had this section right, then do this section, then put the three sections together."

In a squarely positive review of the album, *Rolling Stone* wrote, "The pick to click here is 'Circumstances,' whose chorus reworks the tidal stresses of 'Something for Nothing' in sprung rhythm and whose lyrics are the most personable, least didactic on the record. 'Hemispheres,' the obligatory space opera, was meant to expand on 'Cygnus X-1' from *A Farewell to Kings*, but the musical and thematic references are only tangential; on the new LP, the words belabor the bejesus out of the heart/mind dichotomy and skimp on the science fiction. 'The Trees' is an attractively droll political fable with a gorgeously rendered

Print ads, Philadelphia and Passaic, New Jersey, January 1979. *John T. Comerford III collection/Frank White Photo Agency*



Melody Maker ad, November 18, 1978. *Author collection*



Cashbox ad, December 30, 1978.

classical-guitar intro (one of Lifeson's arcane strengths). But the real new ground is Rush's first stab at an instrumental: 'La Villa Strangiato' boasts taut riffing, acute tempos, flawless phrasing, the discipline to sound effortless and enough energy to flow in torrents."

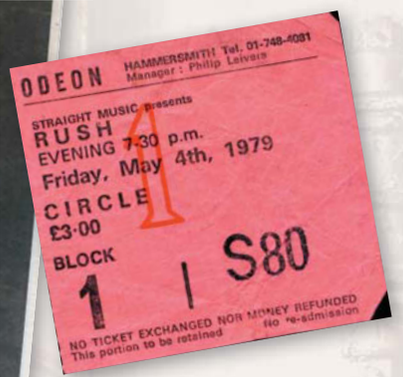
It was testimony to Rush's fan base that they could gather the wagons and turn such a musicianly and literary record like *Hemispheres* gold pretty much immediately, with nothing like a hit single in sight. Yet strivers that they were, Rush was starting to feel as though they were writing to formula—a formula that was nonetheless capable of giving them heart attacks, especially combined with so much time away from home and family for touring but now also for making albums abroad.

"This is the end of the story of Cygnus X-1," said Geddy, in one of many comments made through the years echoing his exhaustion with *Hemispheres*. "It's resolved. It's over. I kind of think the next album will be quite different —it will be time for another change. We wanted to make it a great work, and we just kept at it until it felt right in our minds and sounded magical in the studio. The hardest part was to make it sound as if we'd been slaying it for three months."

The album that would become *Permanent Waves* was, in Geddy's estimation, a joy to record. The band had "discovered" Le Studio, Morin Heights, in rural Quebec, significantly not far from home. Mixing would take place at Trident in London, a locale that Geddy

Courtesy Wyco Vintage/www.wycovintage.com

New Musical Express ad, April 14, 1979. *Author collection*



Hemispheres tour, 1979. *Ray Wawrzyniak collection*

Hemispheres tour, Hammersmith Odeon, London, May 1979. *Fin Costello/Redferns/Getty Images*

PERMANENT WAVES

Andrew Earles

Permanent Waves is the first Rush album truly to showcase the trio's mastery at acclimating to the rapid and potentially threatening changes that dominated the rock music climate as the '80s arrived. The band's dedication to album-anchoring epics had continued with 1978's *Hemispheres*, even while many of their (former) colleagues in progressive rock—Kansas, Manfred Mann's Earth Band, Golden Earring, and Triumph, to name a few—had scrapped the form in hopes of scoring rotation in the AOR sweepstakes.

Perhaps the most casual observers, upon a superficial listen to *Permanent Waves*, would group Rush with the aforementioned bands. After all, the album marked the first of the band's two drastic detours away from the side-long, multi-suite statements of the sort that partially defined their creative and commercial arc leading up to its 1979 recording sessions. Sides A and B end with the relative brevity of "Jacob's Ladder" and "Natural Science," respectively, with both songs clocking under the ten-minute mark. And while 1977's "Closer to the Heart" may have officially charted higher (No. 33 on the *Billboard* pop charts), the two singles from *Permanent Waves* that received repeated airplay would combine to solidify Rush as a hard-rock radio staple and provide crucial groundwork for the mega breakthrough of 1981's *Moving Pictures*. The less-successful of *Permanent Waves*' two singles was the borderline perfect hard rock gem "Freewill," which today seems far more popular than its No. 103 slot on the *Billboard* pop charts would suggest. But the impact of *Permanent Waves*' one-two punch is brought home by the wildly infectious and relatively (for radio) heavy fist-pumping greatness of "The Spirit of Radio." In the last 30-plus years, this track has taken on a life of its own that belies its seemingly low chart highpoint of No. 55.

To understand what it was about these two singles (and *Permanent Waves* as a whole) that set Rush apart from the AOR crowd to which their above-listed prog contemporaries belong, one good listen to "Spirit of Radio" shows that Lee, Peart, and Lifeson were paying close attention to newer sounds coming from realms outside their comfort zone, namely the reggae-informed New Wave pop (or loosely interpreted post-punk) of the Police. Despite the song's breakdown being a clear example of what this writer likes to call *Canadious interruptus* (see April Wine's midsong spoken-verse ruination of the otherwise brilliant hard rock hit "All Over Town" for the ultimate example of this unfortunate phenomenon), the somewhat clumsy sonic curveball is the Police, if not UB40 or outfits residing a little closer to real reggae, all the way.

Elsewhere, "Freewill" stands up to the best of early Cheap Trick and other credible purveyors of hard rock with power pop intentions. Elsewhere on *Permanent Waves*, the previously touched-on "Jacob's Ladder" makes amazing use of heavy music's feel without being nearly as technically heavy as earlier marathons like "By-Tor & the Snow Dog" or most of *2112*. And though stating so is usually taken as derogatory, "Jacob's Ladder" seems far longer than it really is . . . in the best possible sense. Closing out the album is the three-part "Natural Science," a track that doubles the nooks and crannies of "Jacob's Ladder" (and triples the amount of lyrics) and still manages a total running time of 9:27.

All in all, *Permanent Waves* is a classic best-of-both-worlds album, rewarding Rush with the key that unlocked radio longevity for the next three decades without sacrificing the trio's signature artistic drive. Very few bands managed this balance, but this wouldn't be Rush's last time doing so.

figured the band would not have been aware of had they not gone through the trauma of making *Hemispheres*.

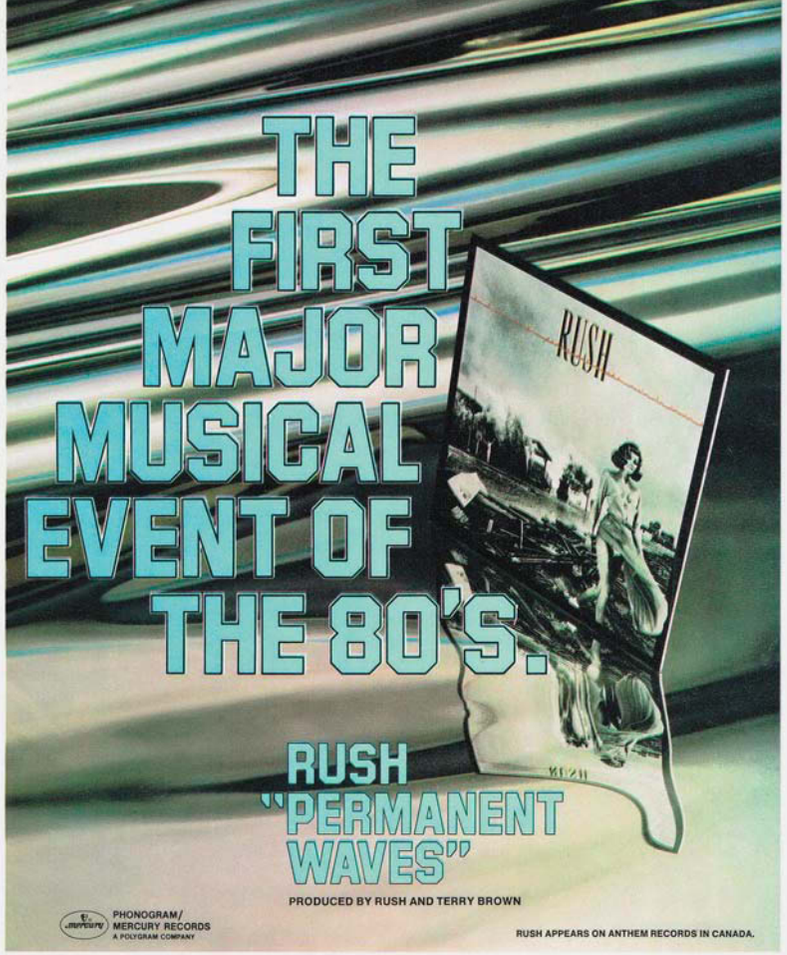
Realizing the exhausting nature of albums that included so many long songs, the band summarily had decided that *Hemispheres* would mark the end of an era. Recording at Morin Heights was an inspiring experience, the band spurred on by the lake locale, the view of the Laurentian Mountains, and the nighttime volleyball games. The result was a buoyant album that eschewed the darkness of *Hemispheres*.

Permanent Waves (working title, *Waveforms*) was released January 1, 1980. By most litmus tests, it would still classify as complicated progressive metal, especially tracks like "Jacob's Ladder" and "Natural Science." Four additional tracks rounded out a record that was in total under 36 minutes long, with each of those containing a plethora of parts. Least complex were the pop-melodic "Entre Nous" and rare ballad "Different Strings." Elsewhere, "Freewill" would become an up-tempo rock 'n' rolling concert classic, eclipsed only by smash single "The Spirit of Radio," the first Rush single of a heavy nature, the first Rush single that felt natural, and the first Rush single that demonstrates all of the magick of Rush.

New Musical Express ad, September 22, 1979. *Ray Wawrzyniak collection*

German ad, May 1979. The foremost non-U.S. compilation was *Rush Through Time*, an eleven-track package covering the debut through *Moving Pictures*. *Author (album) and Ray Wawrzyniak (ad) collections*

Print ad, Netherlands.



Print ad, Canada.

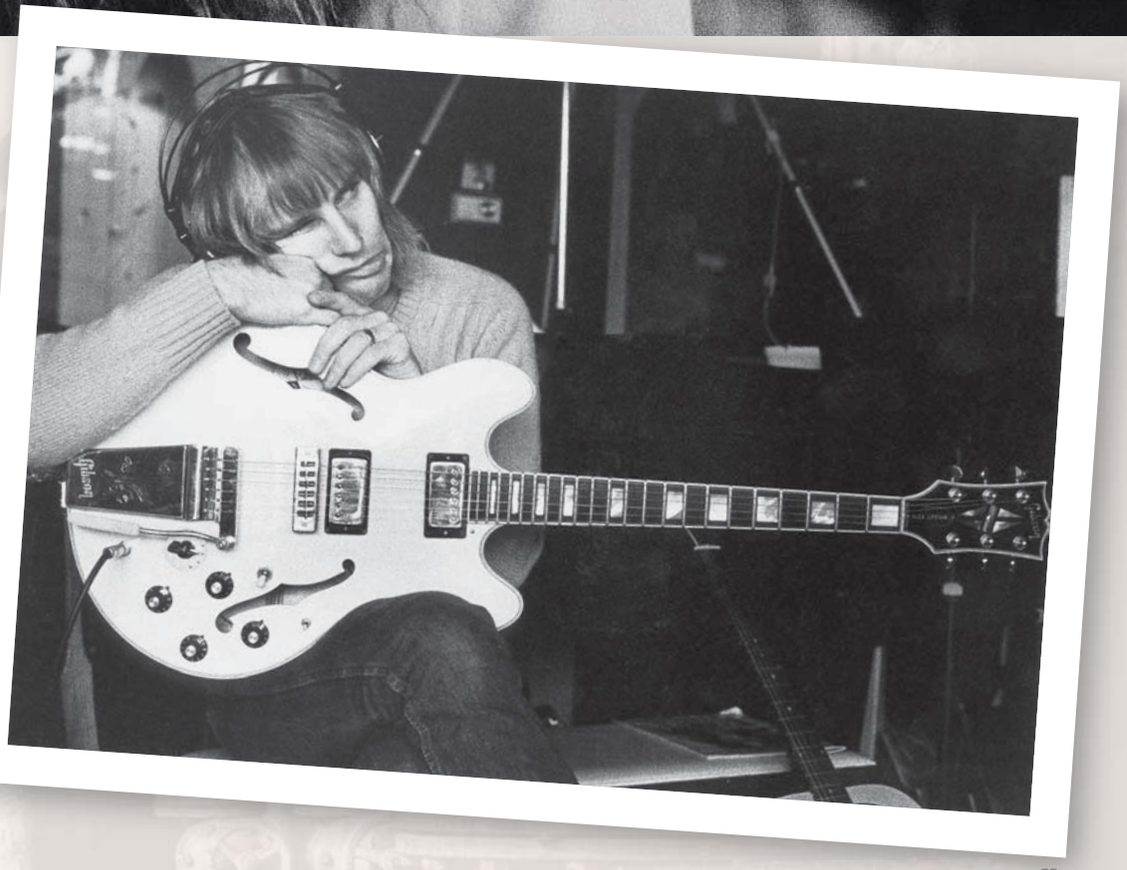
Melody Maker ad, January 26, 1980.

"It was our intention at the time, because of *Hemispheres* taking so much out of us, to give ourselves a creative rest," explained Neil, referring to a six-week vacation that included flying lessons for Alex plus the usual rounds of tennis. "We decided that we owed it to ourselves. At the time we'd been out on the road nonstop all year, and then we went straight into the studio and only had a couple of weeks to get the material together, and ourselves as prepared as we could be. But we weren't that well prepared, and we had to squeeze ourselves. I don't think that the result suffered—working under pressure can be really productive—but we did. You pay a high toll for it in how badly you feel afterwards. It was so draining and difficult. When you're working with a twenty-minute piece of music, I guess it must be what making a film or writing a novel is like. With something of that span you have so many threads that you have to keep together in your mind all the way through, and as you're recording one part you're trying to relate it to the other parts and make sure the continuity is going to be there as well as the integrity of the original parts. It takes a lot of concentration to pull something like that off. It was something we wanted to give a rest for a short while, though there are two pretty long tracks on this album, and the short ones are no shorter than five minutes."

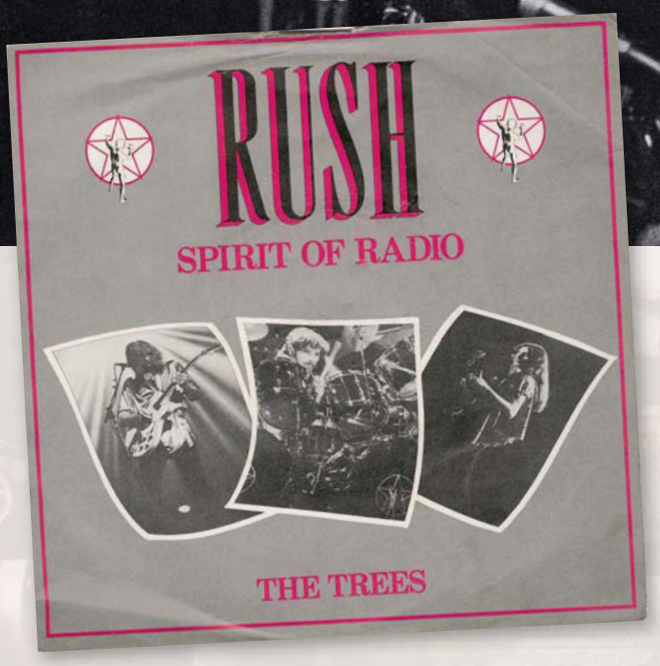
"The Spirit of Radio" (titled for the tagline of hometown radio station CFNY) was one of those short ones, but the beauty of it is that it was still hard-hitting at high speed, yet stuffed with musical surprises. The result is a polished jewel of everything Rush.

Above: Geddy loosens the pipes during the *Permanent Waves* sessions at Le Studio, Morin Heights, Quebec, in October 1979. *Fin Costello/ Redferns/Getty Images*

Right: Down time at the *Permanent Waves* sessions, Le Studio, Morin Heights, Quebec, October 1979. *Fin Costello/Redferns/Getty Images*



Neil catches up on his reading at Le Studio, Morin Heights, Quebec, in October 1979. *Fin Costello/Redferns/Getty Images*



"The Spirit of Radio" b/w "The Trees" and "Working Man" U.K., 1980.

Courtesy Wyco Vintage/www.wycovintage.com

Had the band's new succinctness helped them with the critics? Evidently so. "Earlier LPs like *Fly by Night* and *Caress of Steel* bear the scars of the group's naïvete," wrote *Rolling Stone*. "But now, within the scope of six short (for them) songs, Rush demonstrate a maturity that even their detractors may have to admire. On *Permanent Waves*, these guys appropriate the crippling riffs and sonic blasts of heavy metal, model their tortuous instrumental changes on Yes-style British art rock and fuse the two together with lyrics that—despite their occasional overreach—are still several refreshing steps above the moronic machismo and half-baked mysticism of many hard-rock airs. Fortunately, Rush lead off with their trump card, a frantic, time-changing romp called 'The Spirit of Radio.' Not only is the sentiment right on, but the tune is packed with insistent hooks, including a playful reggae break that suddenly explodes into a Led Zeppelin–like bash."

"I guess our time has come," mused Peart. "It happened with FM radio where it was pretty much a forced thing. It became that we were so popular in so many cities with touring all the time and people calling them up and saying, 'Hey, play Rush,' that radio stations couldn't *avoid* playing us! They certainly didn't do it voluntarily. For a lot of people airplay brings popularity, but for us it was the other way round."

That's the palpable sound of cheering, from band, fan, and critic alike. Now that Rush was celebrating a new immediacy and verve that fortunately their fans relished, there would be no stopping them. "The Spirit of Radio" would pave the way for the real Rush at radio, a life-changing event the band would exploit fantastically on their next record, a career milestone.

"It is Lifeson who unassumingly leads the band instrumentally on stage. Last night, he sported a new look, with a nice, neat page-boy haircut that would make him welcome at any doting mother's home, and a flashy red suit, tie and shoes that gave him a certain innocent Elvis Costello appearance. But his confident power chording was the axis around which the music revolved all night." —Alan Niester, *The Globe and Mail*, 1981

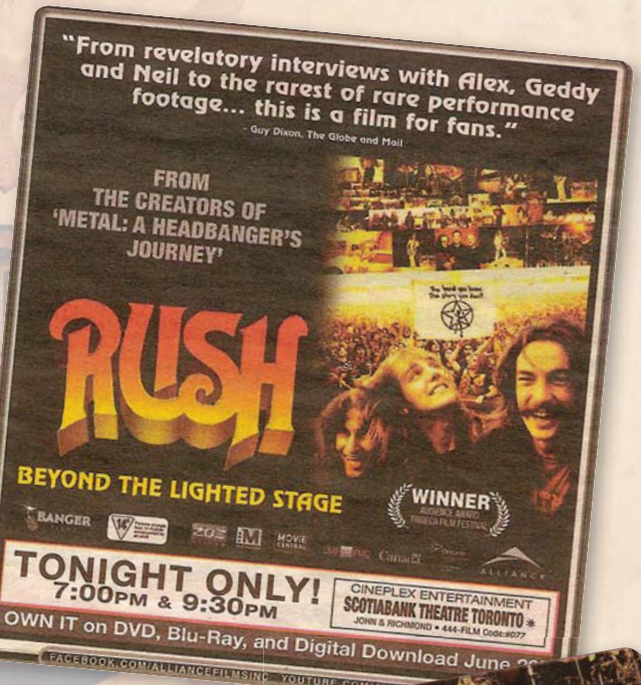
1980–1981

MOVING PICTURES, SHIFTING UNITS

FOLLOWING THE UNVEILING OF ***PERMANENT WAVES,*** Rush managed another action-packed year, playing large venues to large crowds at large expense (causing white knuckles back at SRO, which was now $300,000 in debt). Winter and spring saw the band blanketing the United States and Canada, followed by a curious jaunt across the pond where the guys conducted a U.K. blitz but neglected the mainland entirely. The summer featured a two-month vacation, each of the guys now with growing families.

The proposed idea of issuing another live album at this juncture was quashed, Cliff Burnstein suggesting that the band strike with another studio album while the iron was hot—*Permanent Waves* had gone gold pretty much immediately (it was the band's fifth), and "The Spirit of Radio" had reached No. 51 on the *Billboard* singles chart, pushing the album to an astounding No. 4. Adding to the decision were the promising new bits and pieces the band had been conjuring during soundchecks.

London, June 1980. *Fin Costello/Redferns/Getty Images*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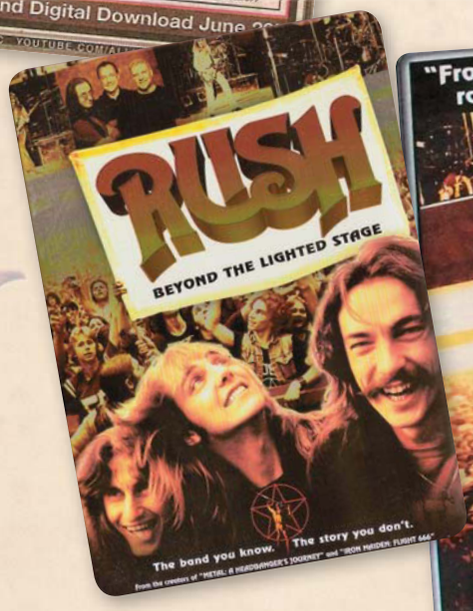
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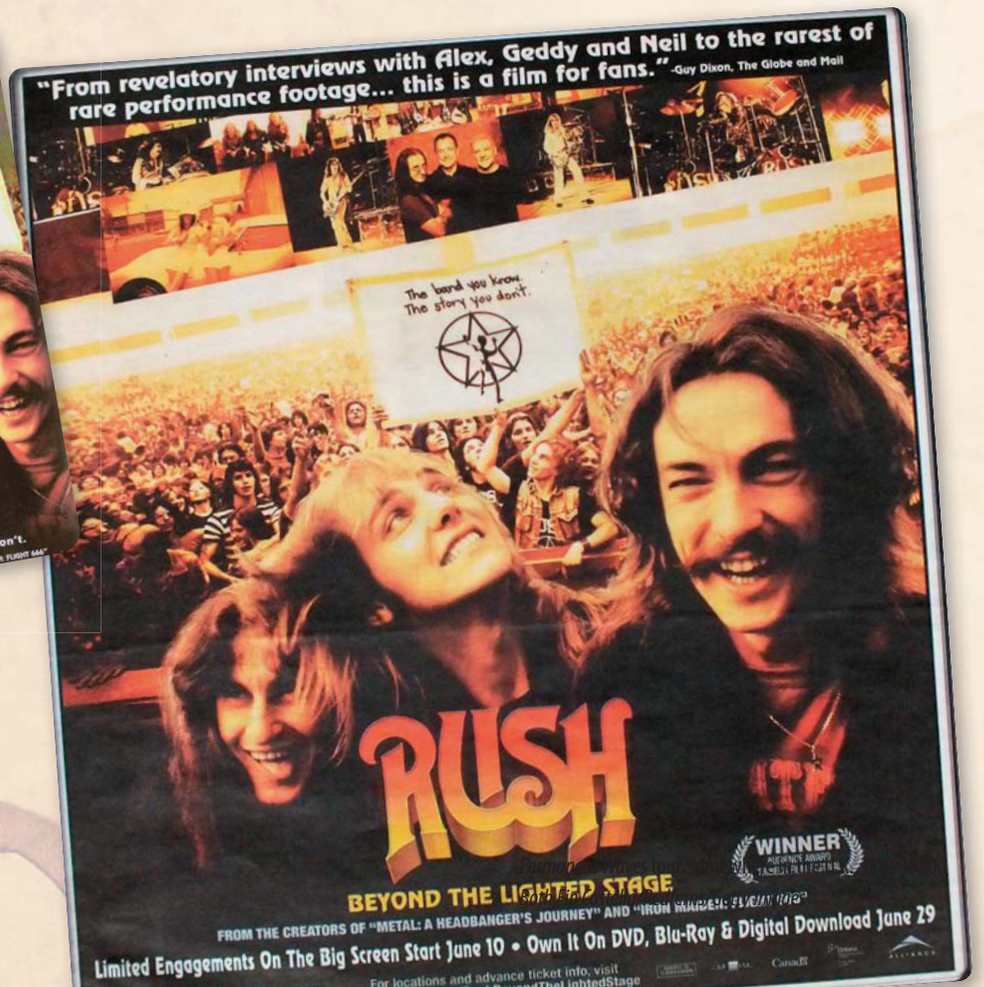
BEYOND THE LIGHTED STAGE
The band you know. The story you don't.


"From revelatory interviews with Alex, Geddy and Neil to the rarest of rare performance footage... this is a film for fans." -Guy Dixon, The Globe and Mail
The band you know. The story you don't.
RUSH
WINNER
BEYOND THE LIGHTED STAGE
FROM THE CREATORS OF "METAL: A HEADBANGER'S JOURNEY" AND "IRON MAIDEN:
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Sounds ad, June 14, 1980.

Similar to last time out, Rush began the new album with a writing retreat, setting up shop in the summer of 1980 at Ronnie Hawkins' farm in the Stony Lake area north of Peterborough, Ontario, converting the barn into a rehearsal studio, with the cottage serving as living quarters (these sessions marked the height of Alex and Terry's interest in remote-control model airplanes). The band then moved once again to Le Studio, home of the fun times and haute cuisine the guys experienced crafting *Permanent Waves*. More model-airplane flying (and crashing) ensued, now joined by rocket launches, mostly the handiwork of Alex and crew member Tony Geranios, also known as Jack Secret.

Writing lyrics at the farmhouse, Neil found his skills rapidly improving; his cinematic approach to writing on tracks like "Red Barchetta" and "Witch Hunt" were reflected by the eventual title of the album, *Moving Pictures*. "Red Barchetta" was specifically inspired by "A Nice Morning Drive," a piece in *Road & Track* magazine by journalist Richard S. Foster. Meanwhile, over in the soundproofed barn, Geddy was experimenting with the latest Oberheim and Prophet synthesizer technologies, inspired by the plethora of keyboard textures within the postpunk music he was consuming to stay current.

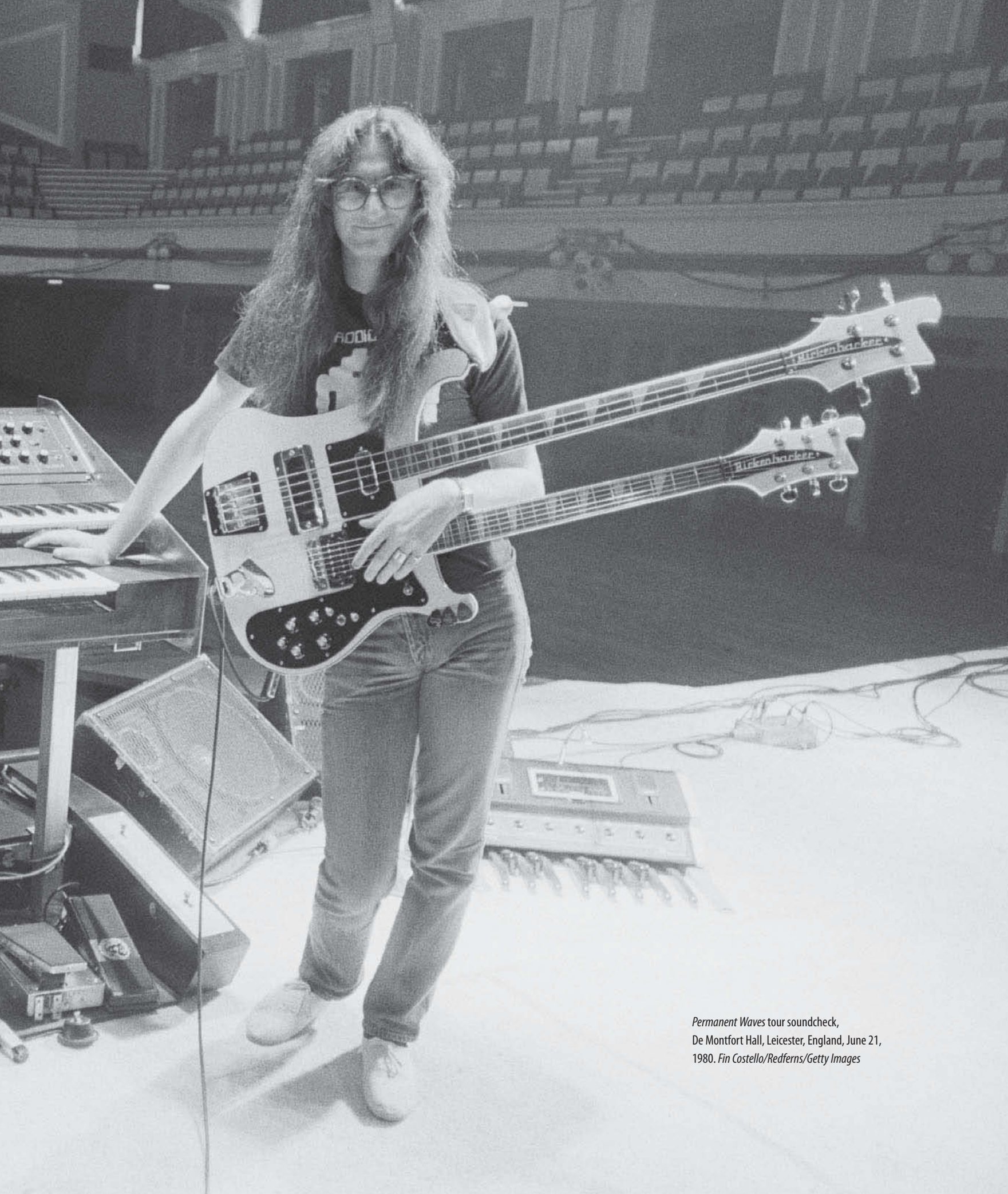
"By *Permanent Waves* we had started to change," explained Neil, charting the path toward *Moving Pictures*. "We had already decided at the end of *Hemispheres* that, 'Okay, that's the end of that.' We had verbalized it. We were very self-aware at the end of *Hemispheres*. We wanted to move on. Then in 1978 and '79, things are changing so much in music around us, and again, being music fans and listening and responding to it—and wanting it, wanting to do it—'Spirit of Radio' was a huge step in that direction. It was of course a deliberate attempt to encapsulate all the different threads of modern music that

T-shirt for the Philadelphia show that was part of the *Moving Pictures* warmup tour.

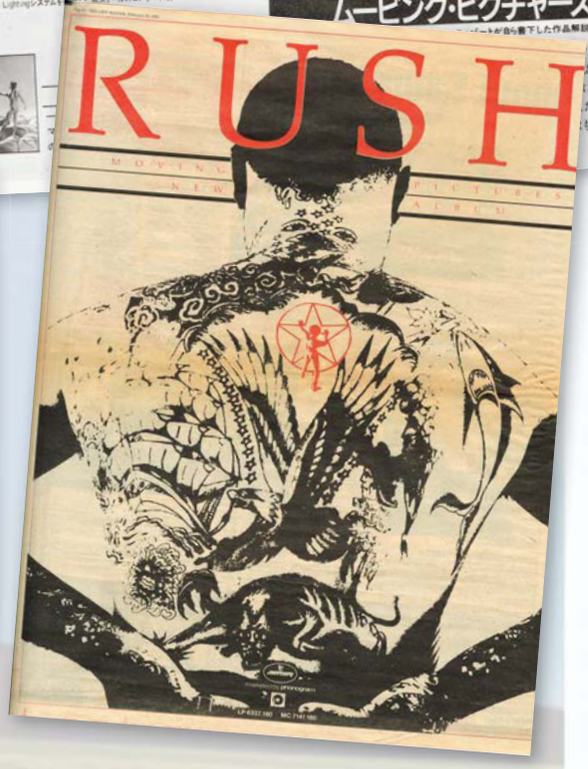
Courtesy Wyco Vintage/www.wycovintage.com

London, June 1980. *Fin Costello/Redferns/Getty Images*

Left and below: Moving Pictures warmup tour, Allentown, Pennsylvania. *Both Jim Altieri collection/ www.altieriart.com*



Permanent Waves tour soundcheck, De Montfort Hall, Leicester, England, June 21, 1980. *Fin Costello/Redferns/Getty Images*



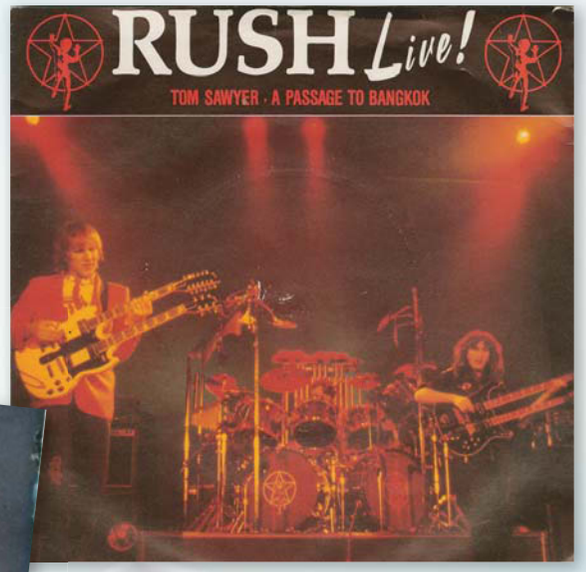
Print ads, U.K.

Author collection

we thought were cool. So that moved on, and we were of course still playing around with the epics at that time, with 'Jacob's Ladder' and 'Natural Science' and all that, but they were taking on a different focus. *Moving Pictures* became truly focused. Where we could be concise and . . . overblown at the same time [laughs], which was what we had been looking for, obviously. That became the foundation for everything that followed through the '80s. With all humility, I like most of what comes after *Moving Pictures*. Talking about songs being designed to play live and be challenging, 'Tom Sawyer' right off the top—I never get tired of it, it never gets easy, and it's always challenging. I've changed tiny little baby details in that song over the years, but almost nothing from that drum part fails to satisfy me now, as a player or as a listener. . . . I think we started to learn so much about musicianship, about composing, about arranging, and consequently the records became much more satisfying."

"Tom Sawyer," with its hive of activity despite its slow tempo, would become the band's biggest hit of all time, Rush's No. 1 most beloved song, with Neil's swirling, surround-sounding drum fills at the apex of the track serving as, quite possibly, the most famous drum passage in all of recorded music (certainly the most ardently air-drummed). But the power of *Moving Pictures* was that the entirety of side one was hit after hit, with "Tom Sawyer," "Red Barchetta," "YYZ," and "Limelight," surely among the top ten most cherished tracks from the entire Rush oeuvre. Side two packs in the eleven-minute "The Camera Eye," but "Witch Hunt" and "Vital Signs" are quite accessible, the latter expanding on the Police-inspired reggae that spiced "The Spirit of Radio." Of note, "Witch Hunt" would be identified as part three of Neil's "Fear" trilogy, the rest of it coming in quirked reverse order over the next two albums, with a fourth part arriving way up into 2002's *Vapor Trails*.

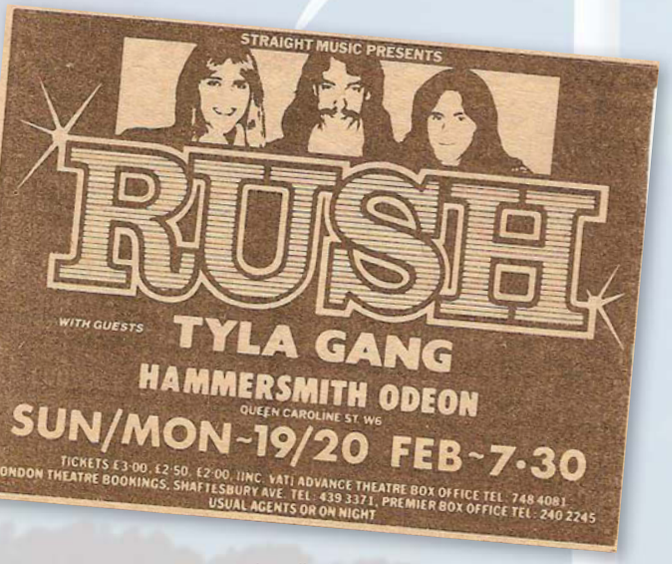
"Tom Sawyer" b/w "Witch Hunt," U.S., 1981.



Above: "Tom Sawyer (Live)" b/w "A Passage to Bangkok," U.K., 1981.

Left: "Vital Signs" 12-inch b/w "A Passage to Bangkok," "Circumstances," and "In the Mood," U.K., 1981. *Author collection*

Moving Pictures tour, Coliseum, Oakland, California, June 6, 1981. *Larry Hulst/Michael Ochs Archives/Getty Images*



Author collection

"Limelight" would hold particular significance for the band, especially Neil, who had seen the most need among the guys to pull away a bit from the mania surrounding Rush. "It has much more to do with our lives than just image. I think it was Todd Rundgren who said that the more popular he became, the less accessible he would become. It's very much a truism, especially if you have a writer's inclination. You want to go to cities, you want to blend in, walk around, probe the areas of the city you may want to use—it's all part of your writing—and you have to do that anonymously. You can't walk in there as some face that's been sold for years. That's another important part of my future that I've got to work on eliminating. I don't want to sell my face anymore: I don't want my face to be a household image. You dare not stick your head out of the window or door. Sitting around in your hotel room not being able to open the curtains and not being able to leave the room is a prisoner's existence! I don't get angry about it or patronizing or condescending about it. I get embarrassed. I feel I want to be back in my room as a regular person again. Basically that's what it comes down to."

In general however—and "Limelight" included—*Moving Pictures* was an easily accessible Rush album, upbeat, quite guitar-charged, very much a power-trio record augmented with just the right amount of synthesizers, and above all the work of a band trying to be less complex. "To me it was a necessary change," said Neil. "Like, for me without *Caress of Steel*, *2112* couldn't exist. And to me *2112* is the stronger, more important work.

MOVING PICTURES

Gary Graff

Moving Pictures is Rush's defining moment—what *Dark Side of the Moon* was for Pink Floyd or *Frampton Comes Alive!* was for Peter Frampton. It's the full realization of a sound that got many to jump on board the bandwagon without losing many who had been there since the beginning.

It's a damn good album, in other words, connecting with those who knew the words to first-album staples such as "Working Man" and "Finding My Way" with those who just liked "Tom Sawyer" when they heard it on the radio.

With the previous year's *Permanent Waves*, Rush cleverly took some leads from the burgeoning New Wave moment and discovered that shorter songs and leaner structures led to greater radio play and popularity. But importantly, the trio managed to achieve that without compromising or dumbing down its brainy, muso brand of rock. *Moving Pictures* brought more of the same but honed it even further. Heck, you could even dance to some of this stuff.

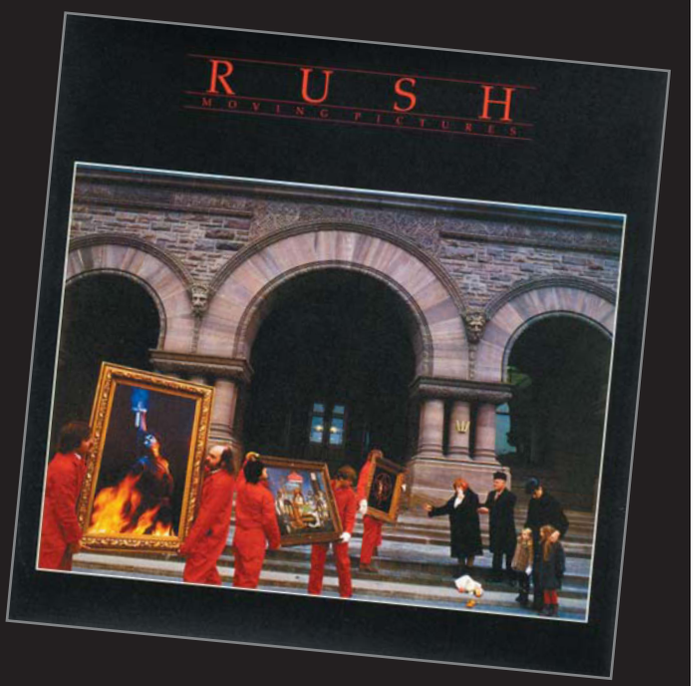
Rush has never straddled the prog and pop divide better than on the album-opening "Tom Sawyer." The group has always been adept at dynamics but this time they brought in actual space, which allowed the individual components of the mix to breathe and made the punchier elements even more formidable. Lee's chorus raps were head-turning new sounds in 1981, while his playful Oberheim OB-X squiggles gave the song a colorful energy. But if there was any doubt about Rush's musical intent, "Tom Sawyer" hops between standard 4/4 and trickier time signatures like 7/8 and 13/16, and Lifeson's unhinged guitar solo gave the song some auteur flare.

Lyrically, Peart worked with Pye Dubois of the Canadian band Max Webster to create a portrait of a "modern-day warrior" or rebel—not the first time the drummer addressed that topic, but this time with a reference point that certainly caught the imaginations of hundreds of thousands who knew Tom Sawyer's name, whether or not they'd read the book, and certainly had Mark Twain grinning in his grave.

But *Moving Pictures* was not subsumed by its big hit, a sign of the strength of its other six songs. A killer Lifeson riff drove a lament about the challenges of notoriety in "Limelight," while "Red Barchetta" moved with the speed of the sleek automobile Peart was writing about. And the Grammy Award–nominated "YYZ" (the abbreviation for Toronto's Pearson International Airport) let Rush flex its instrumental muscles with a kind of brevity (less than four and a half minutes) that was to its benefit.

The enduring impact of those four songs have somewhat eclipsed *Moving Pictures*' second side over the years, and undeservedly so. "The Camera Eye," whose title refers to part of American artist John Dos Passos' U.S.A. Trilogy, is a heavily synthesized eleven-minute epic meant to convey impressions of New York and London—or, if you prefer, just sound like the Rush guys showing off, but tastefully so, wailing away for three and a half minutes before Lee starts singing. "Witch Hunt" emerges from a sea of synthesizer-generated sound effects into a measured composition that encases Peart's detailed lyrics in layers of synth and guitar ambience, while "Vital Signs" picks up on the reggae influences introduced on *Permanent Waves*.

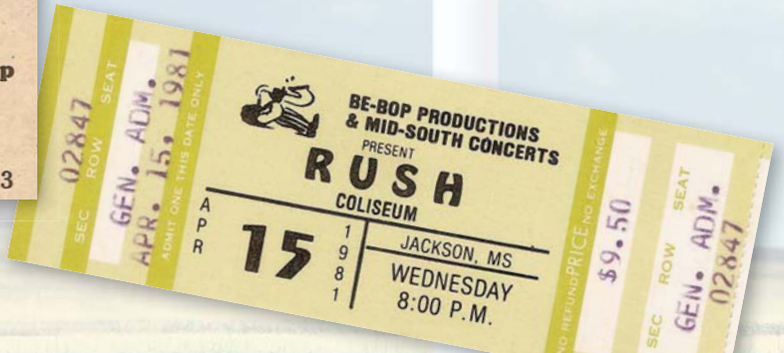
Moving Pictures has stacked up a slew of honors since its release, including quadruple-platinum certifications in both the United States and Canada, and "Tom Sawyer" has been feted with all sorts of TV and film placements and other pop culture references, from *South Park* to *The Sopranos*, Rob Zombie's *Halloween* recast and *The Waterboy*. But it's one of those instances where the accomplishments merit the achievements, an exceptional album that found its place and brought Rush the large audience it deserved.



PolyGram paired Rush with some other bestselling Canadian institutions—Canada Dry and Bob and Doug McKenzie—for this trade ad.

RUSH GIRLSCHOOL

in Essen West Germany, 21 Nov.
Price of £59 includes:
★ Ticket for Concert ★ Luxury Coach Trip
★ First Class Hotel with breakfast
★ Cross Channel Ferry
Depart morning 20th, return morning 22nd Nov.
£20 Deposit secures a place. Tick Box No. 3



Author collection

We may lose touch at times or fall into erring ways but to me this is the price we pay for retaining our integrity and always following a natural path. So if the natural path does lead us through improper areas, that's fine, because it always leads us to the right way. So, without going through *A Farewell to Kings* and *Hemispheres* there'd be no *Permanent Waves*, and without those three there could be no *Moving Pictures*. Everything we've been through in the past, *Moving Pictures* takes a less busy, less nervous crack at. But without that experimentation we wouldn't have the ability, the understanding, or the compositional talents to create this album."

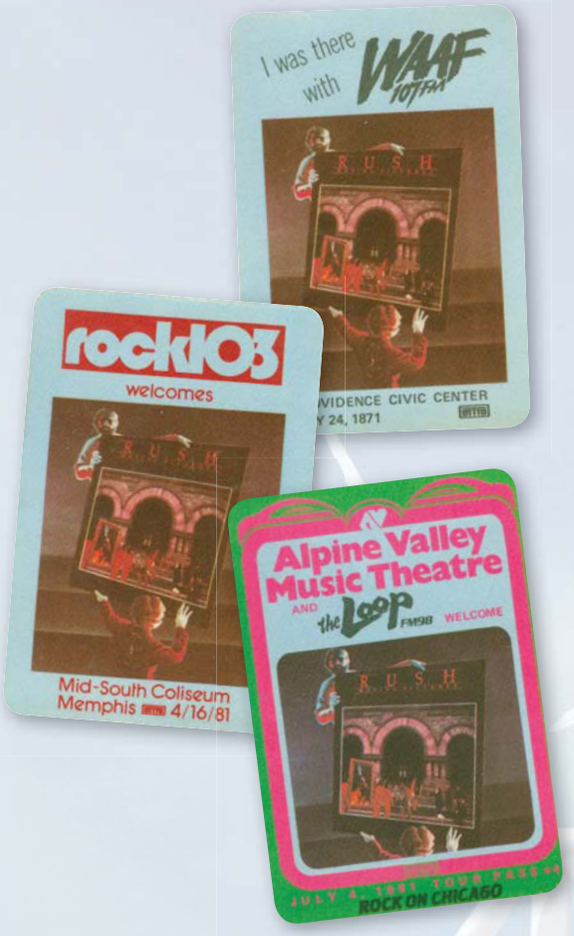
"The difference is in the organization of the music," offered Geddy in agreement. "We learned a lot about composition and arrangement in making *Hemispheres*. *Permanent Waves* and *Moving Pictures* are the result of application, of saying, 'Okay, we know we can do this and we learned all this. Now let's see if we can make a song out of it that'll really have a lot happening in it.' It's not just that the songs are four minutes long so they can get on the radio. It's the quality of those four minutes."

Even in the composition of instrumentals, Rush seems to have raised its songwriting game, "YYZ" (named for the call letters of Toronto's Pearson International Airport), becoming far and away the band's zestiest yet most concise spot of vocal-less fun, at any given show, air drummers joined by air bassists and air Alexes in a communal display of Rush zaniness. Fans have even decided to sing along to the thing, as made famous on the *Rush in Rio* video, taking over where Geddy stays silent, save for his hammering, chunky bass lines.

Author collection

New Musical Express, March 7, 1981. *Author collection*

Frank White collection



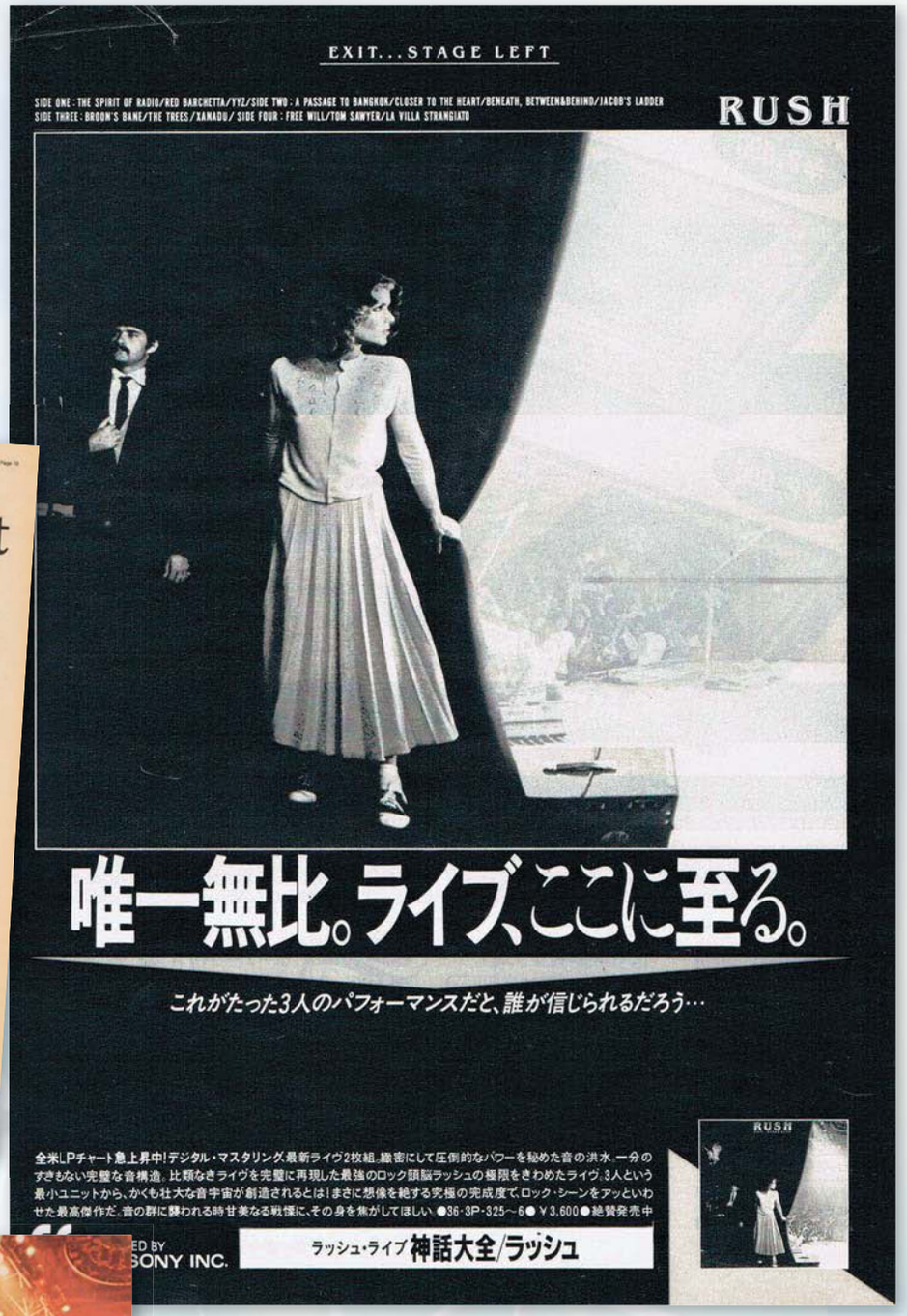
The cleverness, class, and detail afforded *Moving Pictures* carries through to the cover art as well, as visual puns on the concept of "moving pictures" was promulgated, right there on the tripartite entranceway of Queen's Park, Toronto, headquarters to the Ontario government, just a handful of blocks from Massey Hall.

With the album in the hands of fans on February 1, 1981, Rush conducted its usual blitz of North American markets, with support acts ranging from Ian Hunter to FM, Goddo, Saga, and the Joe Perry Project to longtime chums and label mates Max Webster—indeed Rush had collaborated with Kim Mitchell and the guys the previous year on a goliath of a metal track called "Battlescar," arguably the highlight of Max's final album, *Universal Juveniles*.

Rush was in their element, making full use of an increasingly expensive show that for one night wholly transformed hockey barns into hubs of visual and aural technology, all the while stacking up the certifications: in February, *2112* became the band's first platinum record; *All the World's a Stage* attained that status the following month, with *Moving Pictures* zooming past gold to platinum by the end of April.

Taking the summer off, Rush returned with their second double live album, *Exit . . . Stage Left*, issued October 29, 1981, and certified gold a couple of months later. Touring for *Moving Pictures* filled up the rest of 1981, first in Europe with Girlschool as main support, then back in America along the eastern seaboard with Riot supporting. Rush was truly part of rock's elite by this point, with some grumbling that the second live album indicated as much, feeling a tad impersonal compared with the house-on-fire performances of *All the World's a Stage*.

Sounds ad, August 23, 1981.



Print ad, Japan.

Taking the summer of 1981 off, the band returned with their second double live album, *Exit . . . Stage Left*, issued October 29.

Rush collaborated with label mates Max Webster on a goliath of a metal track called "Battlescar," arguably the highlight of Max's final album, *Universal Juveniles.*

Exit . . . Stage Left tour, Ahoy Sportpaleis, Rotterdam, November 14, 1981. *Rob Verhorst/Redferns/Getty Images*

"Obviously any follow-up live album has a lot to live up to," wrote *Melody Maker*'s Brian Harrigan. "As yet I'm not sure whether *Exit* is as strong as its predecessor: it'll take a lot more living with to establish that. But even on the strength of a week or two I'm convinced it's a very good try. *Exit* consists of three sides recorded in Canada and one in the U.K. The tapes were then taken to the solitude of Le Studio in Quebec's Morin Heights where producer Terry Brown spent several months cleaning them up. And that's possibly where my reservations might lie: the album seems a little too clean. I'm told by the band that they did a little overdubbing, but I reckon Brown went a bit too far in his search for the best performance of each individual track from the mounds of tape he had. I would suggest that *Exit* marks the end of a second phase in Rush's career as *All the World* marked the first. A fine achievement—a little less 'live' than it should be, perhaps, but powerful and cohesive nonetheless. Personally I can't wait to see what Rush have in store for us in phase three of their career."

There'd be no truck to complacency in "phase three," no settling in for a next record that sounded like the wildly successful last. The new year would find Rush further immersing themselves in the convention-challenging new wave music coming mostly out of England and surprisingly eschewing the massive metal uptick that was NWOBHM, choosing to follow their muse away from guitars into what fans (mostly) lament as the band's "keyboard phase."

German advertisement, 1981.

Above: New Musical Express, November 7, 1981. *Ray Wawrzyniak collection*

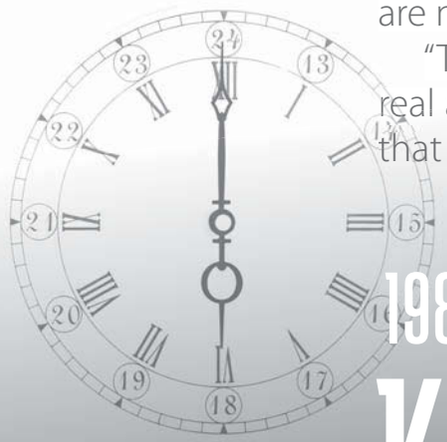
Right: New Musical Express, June 21, 1980. *Author collection*

"*Grace Under Pressure* has a sombre message, but one that is well thought-out. It takes the form of paranoia snaking its way throughout. The music beckons many listens because Rush does not neatly identify the source of fear. It is left as a puzzle.

"Some songs hint that the enemy is illusory. But Rush also talks of electronic surveillance and other high-technology demons. The question is, how big are these monsters? Do we fear them when they are not even there, then remain oblivious to the ones that exist?

"The answer, says Rush, is that we cannot discern which enemies are real and which are imagined. The terrorism of the age of technology is that no one knows."

—Evelyn Erskine, *Ottawa Citizen*, 1984



1982–1988

KEYBOARDS, MULLETS & FINE HABERDASHERY

AS AN INDICATION THAT RUSH COULD DO NO WRONG, Geddy started showing up on best keyboardist polls, causing chuckles within the camp, considering that Lee's transition from single notes to actual chords would represent his breakthrough for the year. Rush's massive multimedia live show had a lot to do with the accolades, for while state-of-the-art animation was flashing on the screen above Peart's head, Geddy often found himself juggling double duty between Rickenbacker and synthesizer.

Perhaps foretelling that the next album wasn't going to celebrate the resurgence of metal taking place in the early '80s, *Signals* (a third Le Studio creation) arrived wrapped in a cover of muted grayish green, punctuated by an arty shot of a Dalmatian and fire hydrant. An additional quirk is that the band's baseball positions are listed, along with those of various other recording helpers and road crew, a nod to the fact that the guys were known to play many a game of baseball and softball on tour to keep limbs limber and spirits positive.

Signals tour, Ahoy Sportpaleis, Rotterdam, May 3, 1983. *Rob Verhorst/Redferns/Getty Images*

SIGNALS

Daniel Bukszpan

In 1982, Rush was at a fork in the road. The massively successful and career-defining *Moving Pictures* was one year behind them, and their next album, *Signals*, would be their last with producer Terry Brown, who had helped craft *2112* and *A Farewell to Kings*, as well as the band's shift into new territory with 1980's *Permanent Waves*. But Lee, Lifeson, and Peart were unhappy with the way *Signals* sounded, and they parted ways with Brown afterward.

It's hard to see why the band members had such reservations about the album and harder still to see why they were unhappy enough with it to part ways with Brown afterward. In this reviewer's opinion, it's every bit the equal of the band's all-time best albums, with not a single bad song in its grooves. "The Analog Kid" is one of their finest up-tempo rockers, while "Chemistry" shows Geddy Lee in command of his keyboards before they got away from him. Plus, there's the odd-metered "Losing It" to satisfy the prog geeks and air drummers. And they still play half of the album when they tour, to this day. So what gives?

The album kicks off with "Subdivisions," which features an odd time signature that sounds natural, a Rush trademark. The keyboard-dominated song achieves a melancholy not normally associated with the band. "The Analog Kid" comes next, a perennial concert favorite. Despite Lifeson & Lee's determination to cram as many notes as possible into the main riff, the song rolls merrily along with uncluttered ease. It also features the best guitar solo on the album, and one of the finest of Alex Lifeson's entire career.

The criminally underrated "Chemistry" is up next. The chorus is absolutely sublime, but the song is really driven by the bass, as is the case with much of the material on the album. The bass is also star of the show on "Digital Man," a six-minute rhythm-section wankfest. When the chorus comes in, it's pretty clear that everyone in the band was listening to the Police's *Ghost in the Machine* a little too much. Still, it's hard to complain when performance is this good.

Side two fades in on "The Weapon," another of the album's overlooked gems. It has the same chilly gloom as "Chemistry," an attribute that first showed up on "Witch Hunt" one album prior. The mood is lightened by "New World Man," the least consequential song on the album. Legend has it that it was written specifically to fill up 3:57 on side two so that the record could be mastered correctly, and it shows. Still, it would be the runaway best song on any album the band made between 1985 and 2002.

Next is "Losing It," the closest thing Rush had at this point to a tearjerker. When it lifts off at midsection into the fusion-ish drum pattern and Ben Mink plays his transcendent violin solo, it's the moment the album sprouts wings, and it's only too bad they never did more stuff like it. Finally, "Countdown," which has gravity without heaviness and weight without plodding, brings everything to a very satisfying close.

Signals betrays an anxious uncertainty on the part of the musicians; if it's a bummer in any sense, it's for that reason. After the euphoria of *Moving Pictures*, perhaps the band's negative feelings toward *Signals* could be attributed to what-do-we-do-for-an-encore syndrome. Be that as it may, *Signals* stands 30 years later as one of the strongest albums in the Rush catalog—even if they didn't realize it at the time.

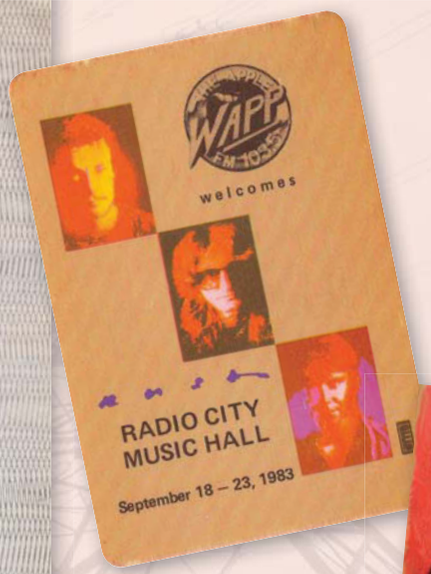
Once inside, opening track "Subdivisions" cascaded upon the listener with whooshes of synthesizer, followed by a "Red Barchetta"–like rocker called "The Analog Kid." Many more electronic washes textured the balance of this brave step forward and commercial step sideways.

The percolating futuro-reggae advance single to the album, "New World Man", was cooked up because the album was coming up short on time (hence the working title, "Project 3:57"), while haunting ballad "Losing It" features one of the catalog's rare and best guest slots, namely Ben Mink on violin (Mink also shows up on Geddy's solo album). But it is "Subdivisions" that would become the album's main anthem over the years, Neil accurately summarizing the song as "an exploration of our background as children of the suburbs. Of course, a great number of our fans probably have the same sort of background—that's a universal in this day and age."

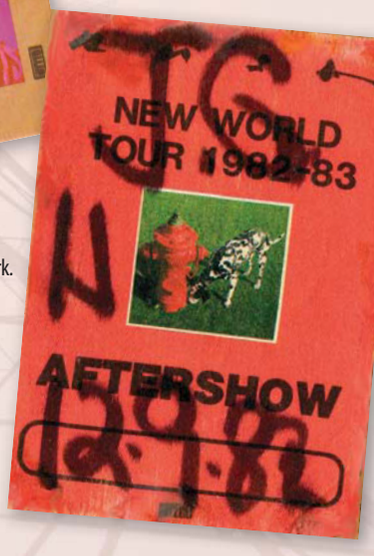
A deep album track highlight to the record is the keyboard-profuse closer "Countdown," in the words of Neil, "a re-creation of our experiences attending the first *Columbia* [space shuttle] launch in Florida. Because we have some friends at NASA, we were able to get hold of the actual sound tapes—which we used on the record—and a

"New World Man" b/w "Vital Signs (Live)," U.S., 1982.

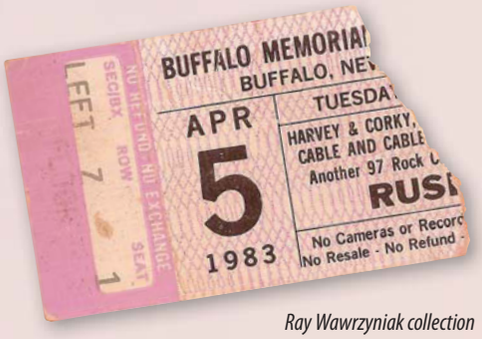
Author collection



New York City residency, 1983.
Ray Wawrzyniak collection



Nassau Coliseum, Uniondale, New York.
Romano Gonnella Jr. collection/Frank White Photo Agency



Ray Wawrzyniak collection

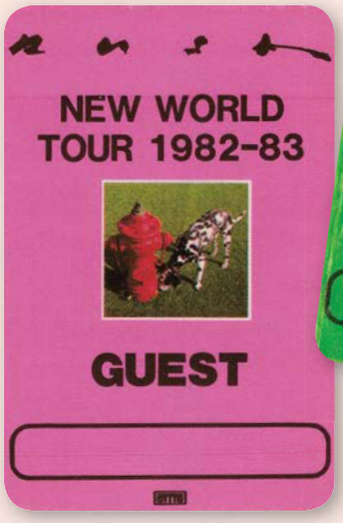
Author collection

whole lot of original footage which we'll be able to use in our rear-screen projections. It's worth a lot of thought and investment to us; for one thing, it adds so much to the show. Each year we have one or two new films specially shot to accompany certain songs, and other films get recycled as some songs get dropped and others added."

Reiterating the band's determination to keep challenging themselves and their fan base, Neil opined further, "Once you've set aside commercial considerations and operate on your own system of values, the security is gone. Past success gives you freedom but it doesn't give you any satisfaction. One reason this new album was so difficult for us was because we were trying something different with a lot of the songs—and with texture, the overall sound. There's more synthesizer work this time—and even down to fine points, we went for different types of drum sounds, different ways of mixing things together. So, even though we've made eight or nine albums, all that experience didn't serve us all that well. *Signals* took us a long time because we were trying not to repeat ourselves. Past success gives us the independence and the ability to decide when, where, and how we're going to work—and no one else has the right to gainsay that—but, at the same time, we're going in each time with a fresh slate. One approach is to assume that a particular album is as good as the last, and that people will buy it on that basis—that attitude doesn't work for us. We're concerned about making something that's both different and better."

Courtesy Wyco Vintage/www.wycovintage.com

Courtesy Wyco Vintage/www.wycovintage.com



Both author collection

Ray Wawrzyniak collection

"The Enemy Within" video shoot at Battersea, London, April 1984.
All Fin Costello/Redferns/Getty Images

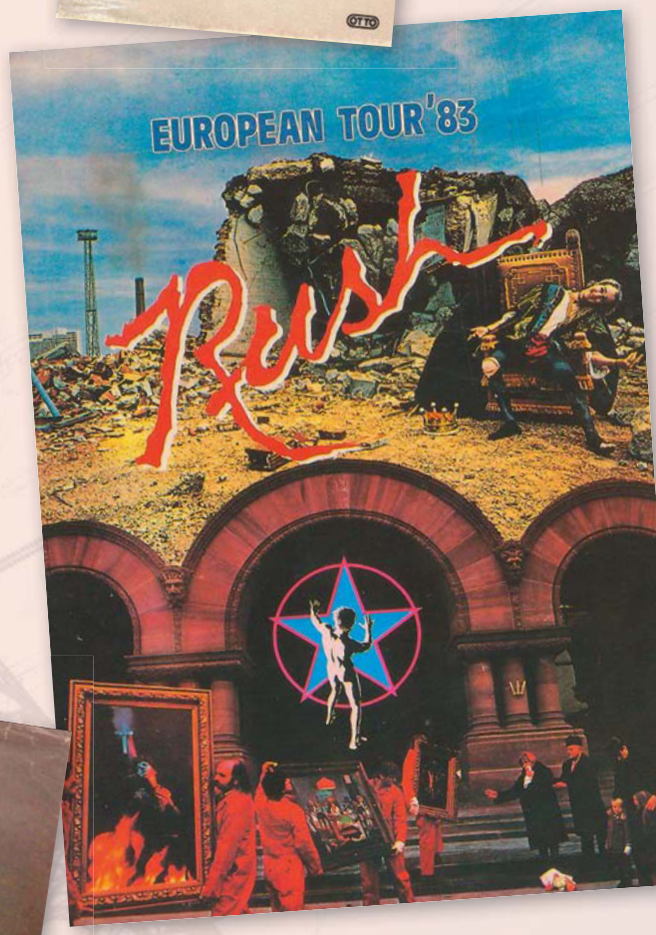
"I don't like to be trapped behind my keyboards but a lot of the new material requires me to be there," noted Geddy, who, unbeknownst to him at the time, would find himself manically multitasking at every Rush show from this day forward. "On the last tour I was able to spend 60 percent of the time running around but now it's much less. So I think you have to be conscious of the fact that the band is a little static and therefore try to make the visuals a bit more happening. When I initially started playing [keyboards] I just wanted to use the occasional string line, but the thing is that I like writing on keyboards and I feel it gives us somewhere interesting to go to—it's helping us mold our sound into something different than it was before. And I think it's a real bonus. It's one hell of a challenge to me and, to tell the truth, I do get very excited about using keyboards."

"I'm still very much in the dabbling stage," continued Geddy. "Put me beside any real keyboard player and it's a joking matter. And I don't really pretend that I can play. I can write solo lines and melodies and play basic chord patterns, which is really all I need. I certainly don't have any illusions about being a Keith Emerson or anything like that."

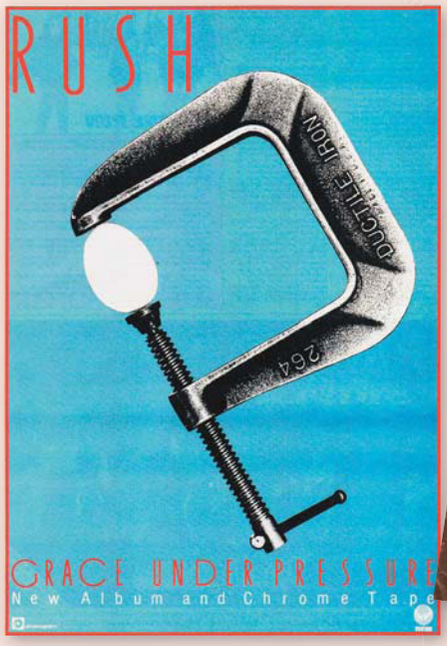
Once the songs of *Signals* began to settle in, the band started to express dissatisfaction with the album, mostly bemoaning the lack of heaviness, the tipping of the scales too far toward keyboards. One casualty of the band's restlessness would be their relationship with Terry Brown, producer since the beginning. A search was on for someone to take the reins next time out, a bad omen upon what would become *Grace Under Pressure* coming in the form of U2 man Steve Lillywhite bailing on the band at the last minute. Hasty replacement Peter Henderson would cast a further pall on the project, a record as exhausting to make as *Hemispheres*, but pointedly without the satisfaction of the final result.

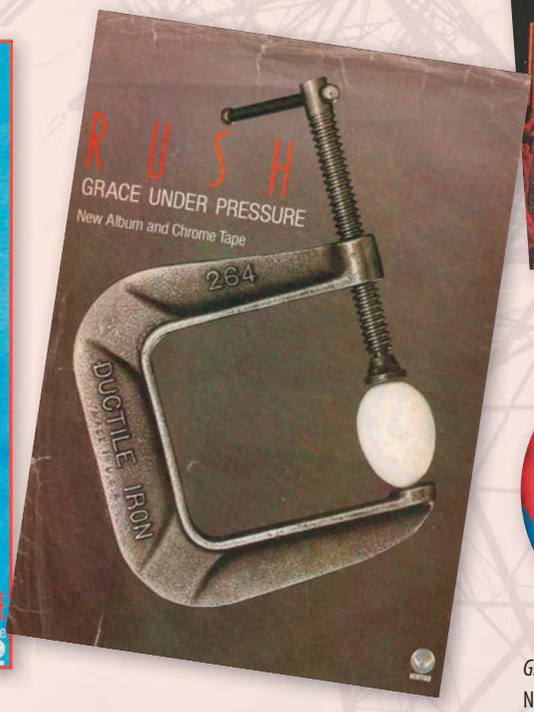
Issued on April 12, 1984, *Grace Under Pressure* arrived seventeen months past its predecessor. This was less given to Rush pursuing good on their promise to become more rounded people, but rather the horrified realization that with Henderson, they didn't have a leader or organizer but a "good engineer" and that they would have to plow through most production decisions on their own in addition to playing their traditional roles.

All Author collection



Tour program. *Ray Wawrzyniak collection*





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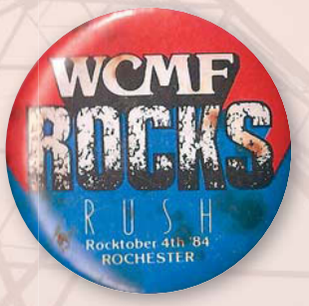


Grace Under Pressure tour, Rochester, New York. *Ray Wawrzyniak collection*

"The Enemy Within" video shoot at Battersea, London, April 1984. *Fin Costello/Redferns/Getty Images*

The Holocaust, the Cold War, close friends dying, futility, futurism, anger, and mortality… the subject matter of *Grace Under Pressure* was as dark as the fatigued birthing of the album itself. Unsurprisingly, there were no real hit singles, although one silver lining of the fraught experience was the elevated artistry of the album's music videos, lead single "Distant Early Warning" in particular riding the front edge of the MTV revolution. "In the middle of working on that album we took off some time to play several shows at Radio City Music Hall in New York," noted Peart, referring to a string of semi-legendary intimate dates, with neo-proggers Marillion as support. "Then we came back to the rehearsal hall, and there was such a fresh input from having played live. 'Distant Early Warning' was one of the songs that we wrote right away after we returned."

GRACE UNDER PRESSURE

Neil Daniels

Rush's tenth studio album was in many respects as much of a rebuke to their previous studio album, *Signals*, as it was an extension of the band's burgeoning new sound. Whilst touring *Signals*, the band had come to a consensus that they wanted to work with a different producer other than Terry Brown, who had produced a run of Rush albums from *Fly by Night* (1975) to the aforementioned *Signals* (1982). It was an amiable split, and the band even paid homage to Brown in the sleeve notes to *Grace Under Pressure* with the quote "*et toujours notre bon vieil ami—Broon*" ("and always our good old friend").

After the departure of Steve Lillywhite, who was initially slated to produce *Grace Under Pressure*, the band members produced it themselves with assistance from Peter Henderson, best known for his work with prog rock outfits King Crimson, Frank Zappa, and Supertramp. Recorded at Le Studio in Morin Heights, Quebec, between November 1983 and March 1984, the album saw the band experimenting with different sounds, including reggae and ska in some songs, and further developing the synthesizer sound they had explored on *Signals*. Although some long-standing Rush fans—those who prefer the more progressive rock-based sound of the previous decade—felt alienated by the new sound, others look fondly on the album. Neil Peart was, at the time, heavily influenced by the New Wave sound coming out of the U.K. with bands such as Talk Talk.

As in the past, many of the songs on *Grace* reflect Peart's interest in science fiction themes. Given the album's moniker, it is evident that the general theme that runs through the album is how humans cope under varying kinds of pressure. "Between the Wheels" and "The Body Electric" are intriguing songs whose lyrics reflect such themes and whose music features a very dystopian sound harnessed during fourteen-hour workdays in the studio. Perhaps most intriguing of all is the track "The Enemy Within," a part of what has been termed the "Fear" series that began with "Witch Hunt" on *Moving Pictures*, continued through "The Weapon" from *Signals*, and even went so far as "Freeze" from *Vapor Trails* (2002).

However, not every track has a science fiction theme. "Red Sector A" focuses on the Holocaust, chiefly the memories of Geddy Lee's mother, who was held prisoner at the Bergen-Belsen concentration camp. "Distant Early Warning" is generally understood to be about dealing with life after a nuclear holocaust, while "Afterimage" was a tribute to a friend who had passed away. *Rolling Stone*'s Kurt Loder wrote in his review of the album at the time that "Rush is a band with a message." Indeed they are.

Grace Under Pressure is an accessible album even if classic rock purists have lamented its overuse of synths. Released on April 12, 1984, it peaked at No. 10 on the U.S. *Billboard* 200 and No. 5 in the U.K. Top 40 album charts. *Grace Under Pressure* received generally positive reviews, and although Rush may have lost some fans during this era they were fortunate to acquire a new spread of music lovers.

All author collection

"I thought that *Grace Under Pressure* was the right album at the right time," Neil said a few years after the fact. "It was a time of crisis in the world and I was looking around and seeing my friends unemployed and having a very bad time. Inflation was rampant everywhere and people were basically in trouble. The world looked dark. That album to me was a tremendous statement of compassion and empathy with the world and I thought because of this it would have a similar accessibility as *2112* or *Moving Pictures* in their own eras. But it didn't have the desired impact because people do not wanna hear about sadness when reality is so gloomy."

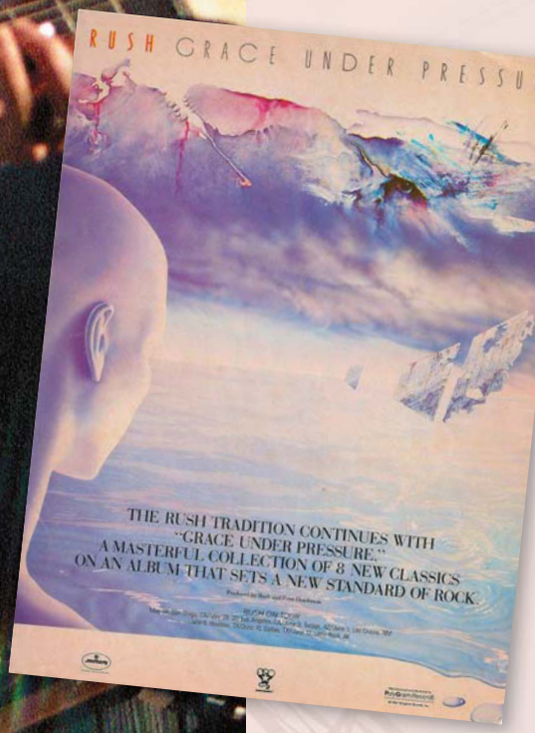
Grace Under Pressure does, in fact, seem like a correction toward more guitar after *Signals*, certainly heavier in contrast to what comes after. In fact, decades later, Alex picked it out as the band's last heavy record. "Well, in a way, *Counterparts* was a pretty driving record, but *Grace Under Pressure* had that thing to it," he said. "I think because it's kind of dark, sort of grayish, not a black record but it's a pretty dark gray record [laughs]. It has a bit of that heavy character to it. Certainly, yeah, but I don't know if we'd ever had a really heavy record, to be honest."

Critics and fans now had two Rush albums in a row to complain about, aided and abetted by a band that was honest enough about the construction of *Signals* and *Grace Under Pressure* to express their own reservations. Settling in was a worldview that Rush represented a form of outsider cult band, no matter how big they got. Wrote Kurt Loder in *Rolling Stone*, "This album needs no critical assistance: If you like Rush, you'll love it; if not, then *Grace Under Pressure* is unlikely to alter your assessment of the band as a lumbering metal anachronism. Rush has managed to incorporate a number of modern elements into its sound (note the almost danceable rhythms in 'Afterimage' and 'Red Sector A,' and the

Print ad, Netherlands.

Print ad, Japan.

Phonogram print ads, Germany.



Ray Wawrzyniak collection

Grace Under Pressure tour, The Spectrum, Philadelphia, November 5, 1984.
© *Frank White*

swelling synthesizers and electropercussion throughout). Geddy Lee, the group's bassist and vocalist, has also gotten his dog-calling falsetto shriek under control. The problem, though, is musical. On record, the lack of melody and any but the most rudimentary harmonic development soon becomes oppressive. In addition, Alex Lifeson is not a particularly interesting lead guitarist, and the strictures of the trio format still result in more splattery drum bashing than you'll ever care to hear. Rush delivers the goods, all right: strong social statements enveloped in a massive, pounding sound. But it's old news, and old music, too."

Still, despite the grind of being Rush during this period, and despite a lack of hit singles, the band managed immediate platinum sales for both *Signals* and *Grace Under Pressure*, with *Moving Pictures* attaining double platinum before the close of the year. After a typically exhaustive American tour, November 1984 found the band playing Japan (plus Hawaii) for the first time, an experience Neil found unsettling, never quite getting over an incident in which he tried to intervene in a brutal wife-beating incident at the hotel. What left an impression as much as the violence was the fact that the hotel staff turned on the band, acting as if they were Westerners interfering in an everyday domestic dispute.

Author collection

Ray Wawrzyniak collection

Frank White collection

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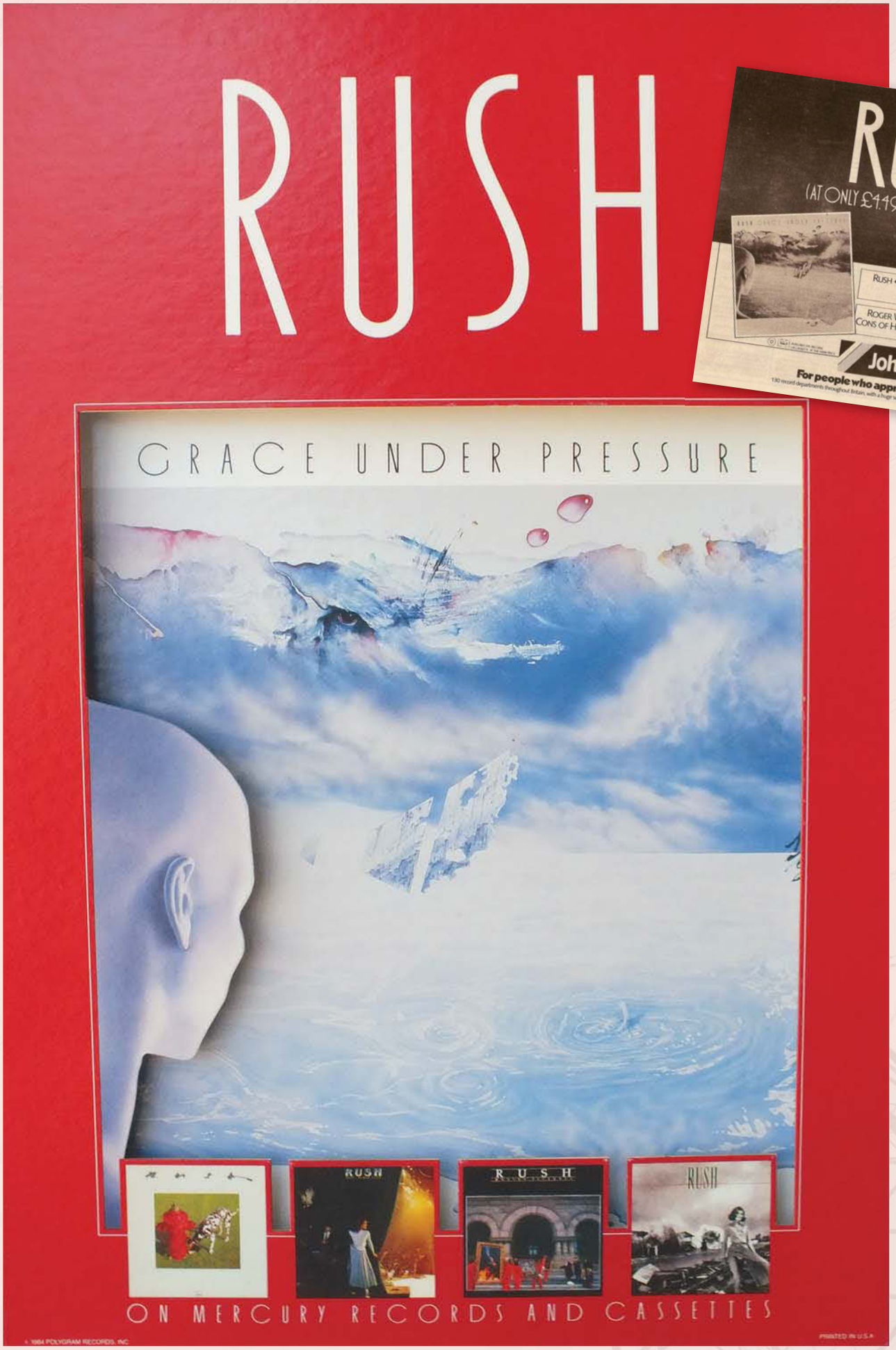
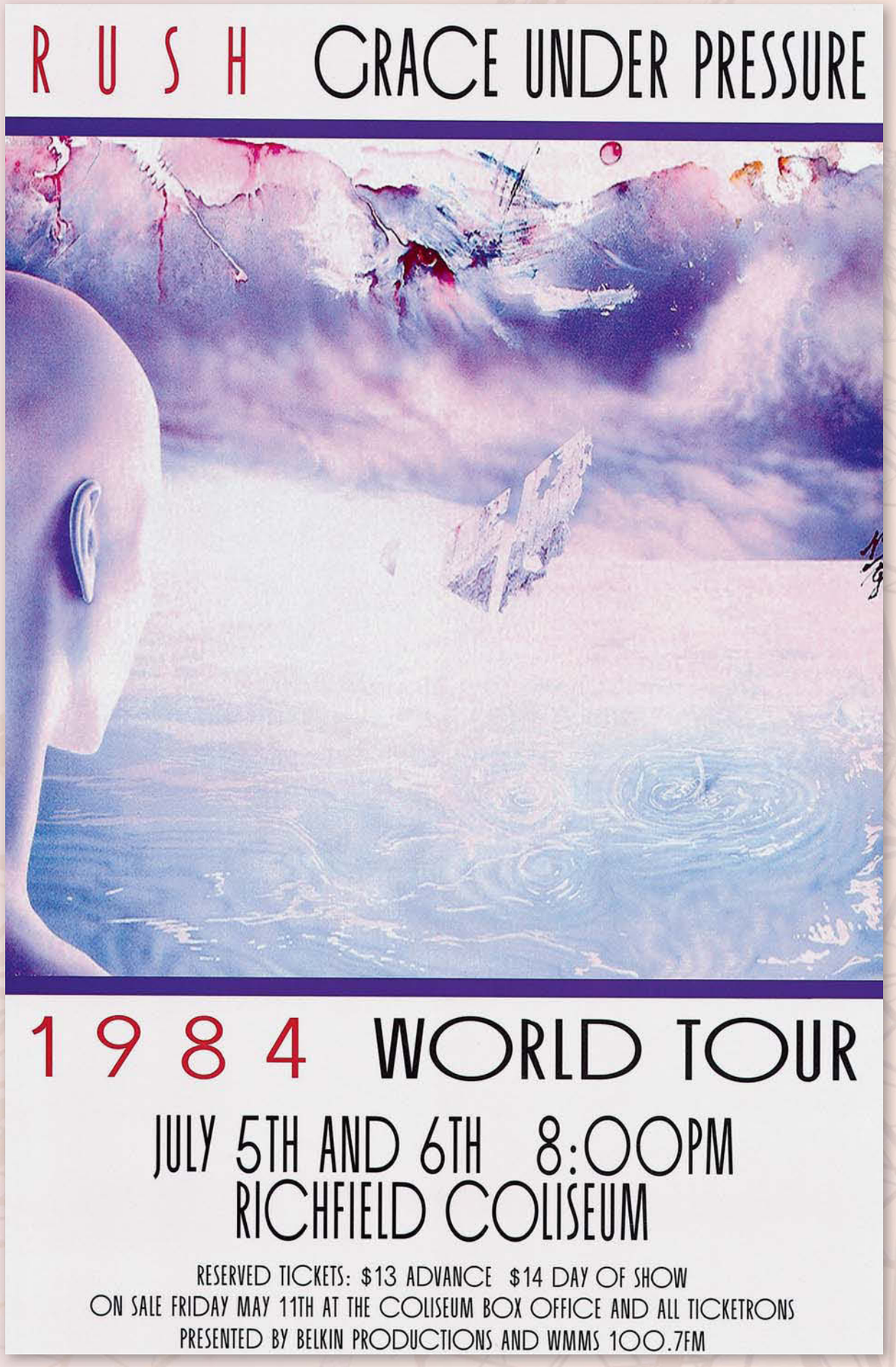


Print ad, U.K. *Author collection*

Grace Under Pressure record store display. *Author collection*



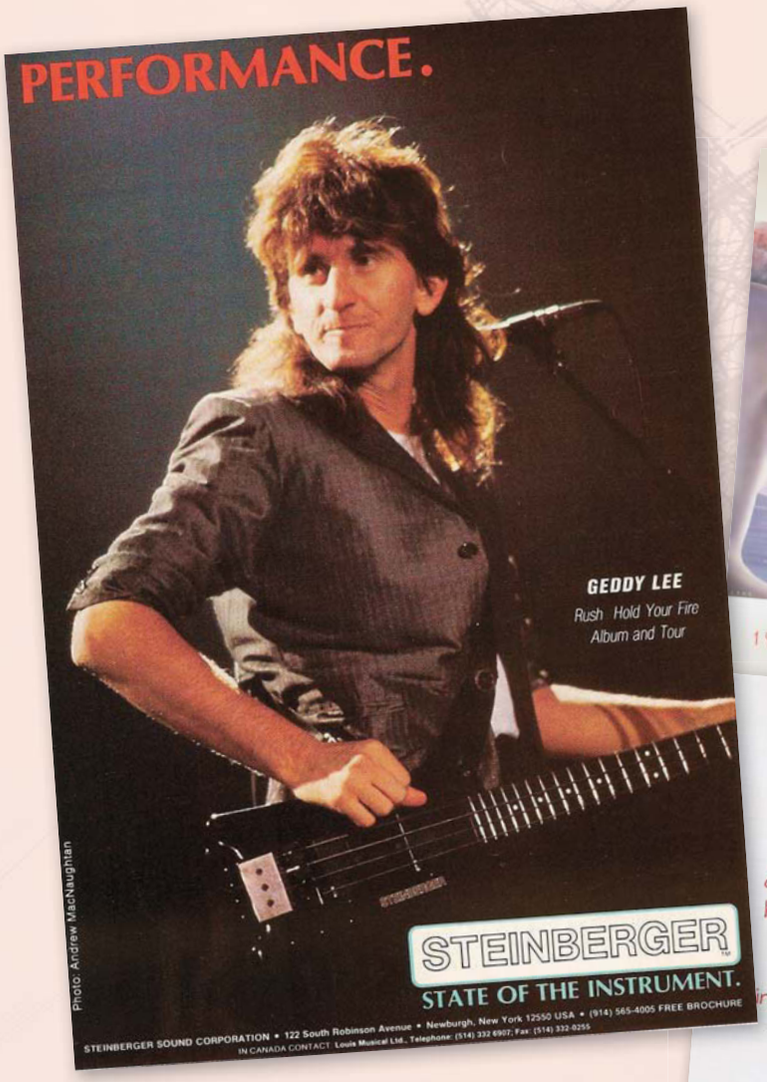
Grace Under Pressure tour, Richfield, Ohio.

Part of the band's success with record sales during this period can be attributed to their legendary long tours, strong ticket sales, and firm headliner. In turn, the success of Rush on the road was attained through the managed decision to pour most profits back into the show through the use of the best audio and visual technology available, in parallel with the band's philosophy of exploring the sounds of every new musical toy on the market.

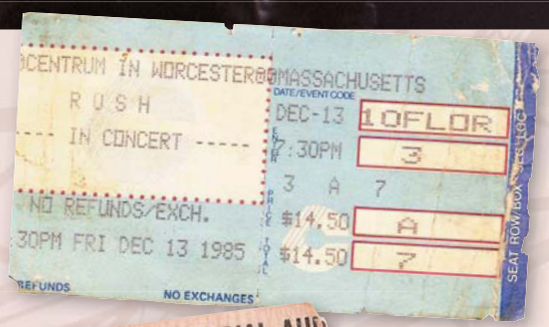
Unfortunately, an early-adopter ethic can result in choices that render music the opposite of timeless, instead anchoring it to a day and age. In the case of *Power Windows*, that day and age would be the 1980s and the rock music clichés thereof. Even as Rush was attracting hoots of derision for their sassy haircuts, skinny ties, and dinner jackets, Geddy was again pushing keyboards to the fore, while Alex was looking to replicate the wiry sounds of the guitar in post-punk, apparently blind to the reduced role of the axe in that music. Meanwhile, Neil was discovering the electronic kit, soon to live in infamy as one of the most discredited instrumental trends of yore.

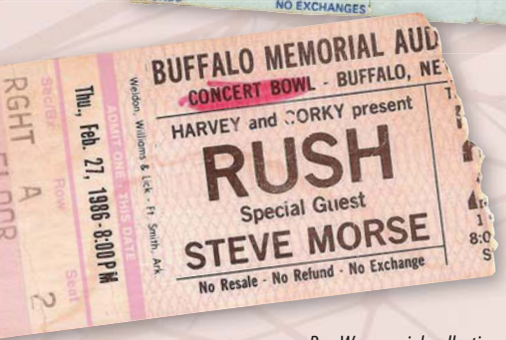
Ray Wawrzyniak collection

Grace Under Pressure tour program, 1984. *Author collection*



During the mid-1980s Geddy endorsed Steinberger's "headless" L-2 bass. *Author collection*





Author collection

Ray Wawrzyniak collection

Pop producer and top arranger Peter Collins arrived in the Rush camp (and stayed awhile), aiding and abetting the exploration of modern sounds and upscale haberdashery. The first collaboration was the aforementioned *Power Windows*, issued October 29, 1985, a record that by Lee's admission was the first created without any concern for the execution of the songs live as a three-piece. Indeed, the band allowed Collins to bring in keyboard technology whiz Andy Richards to program certain parts. Choirs and real strings were also utilized, with the modern attitude that if these tracks were to be played live, they could be sampled.

"You have to be very organized and decisive when recording keyboards these days," mused Geddy, in conversation with Philip Bashe, "or else you could sit there forever. 'What about this sound?' After a while, you can't hear anything anymore, just digital noise, and it can be very frustrating. I think that you constantly have to go back to the song and ask yourself what you're looking for. Are you just jerking off—looking for a sound for the sake of a sound—or does the part really require it? That's the hallmark of a good producer, someone who remembers that and keeps bringing you back to the song."

"I guess it could be perceived as being uplifting or cynical, as can *Grace Under Pressure*," said Neil of *Power Windows*, in conversation with *Canadian Composer* magazine. Of note, as

Opposite top and above: Power Windows tour, Rosemont Horizon, Rosemont, Illinois, March 21, 1986.
Both Paul Natkin/WireImage/Getty Images

POWER WINDOWS

Jeff Wagner

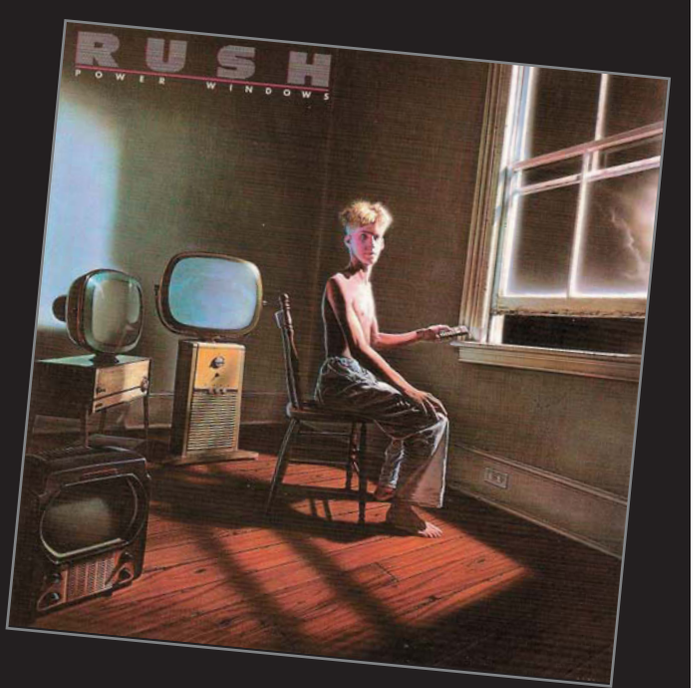
Rush's eleventh album followed its predecessor quickly—the last time a mere eighteen months would separate Rush albums—which is probably why it has much in common with 1984's *Grace Under Pressure*. They feel like companion albums, which you can't say for very many other couplets of Rush albums; there are more similarities between the two than differences. The biggest difference is in production. Where Peter Henderson gave *Grace Under Pressure* a bright, almost airless buoyancy, *Power Windows* is a denser, more heavily layered affair. This was the band's first album with producer Peter Collins, who would become the second most-utilized producer in Rush history.

Opener "The Big Money" takes what the previous album's "Red Lenses" and "Kid Gloves" did and squishes them together: funky and pop-inflected in a way that showed Rush were now firmly ensconced in the dinner-jacketed, hair-sprayed, super-slick 1980s. And for a band that always moved with the times, it all makes good sense. The writing was still totally smart, the playing still formidable, the ideas still grand. After the bouncy fun of the opener and the almost New Wave vibe of second song "Grand Designs," things get serious. Wide sonic spaces and stacks of synths and electronic drums mesh and sometimes battle with the more organic, traditional instrumentation. The sense that every instrument and sound is hurling out of the speakers in one gigantic ball makes mountainous songs such as "Manhattan Project" and "Emotion Detector" shimmer with the kind of majesty that defined Rush's earlier, more epic eras. But it also has a coldness that other synth-dominated music of the time would have, something that lends this particular Rush era a kind of alien, distant atmosphere. Much of the material takes multiple listens to sink in, making *Power Windows* a classic "grower" of an album. Not only is it a dense sound to absorb, but the compositions don't give themselves up immediately.

Everything about *Power Windows*, from sound to performance to dynamics, is utterly consistent. Its eight songs feel like eight variations on one theme, each contributing to the greater whole—the classic function of any great album's immersive listening experience. That said, two stand above the rest: "Marathon," with its big, key-changing chorus sequences, punctuated by some of the last truly high pitches we'd hear Geddy Lee attempt in the studio, and "Mystic Rhythms," an exotic vista of sound that seems a launching pad for the travel songs Neil Peart would pen in the future ("Tai Shan," "Ghost Rider," and the entire *Clockwork Angels* album).

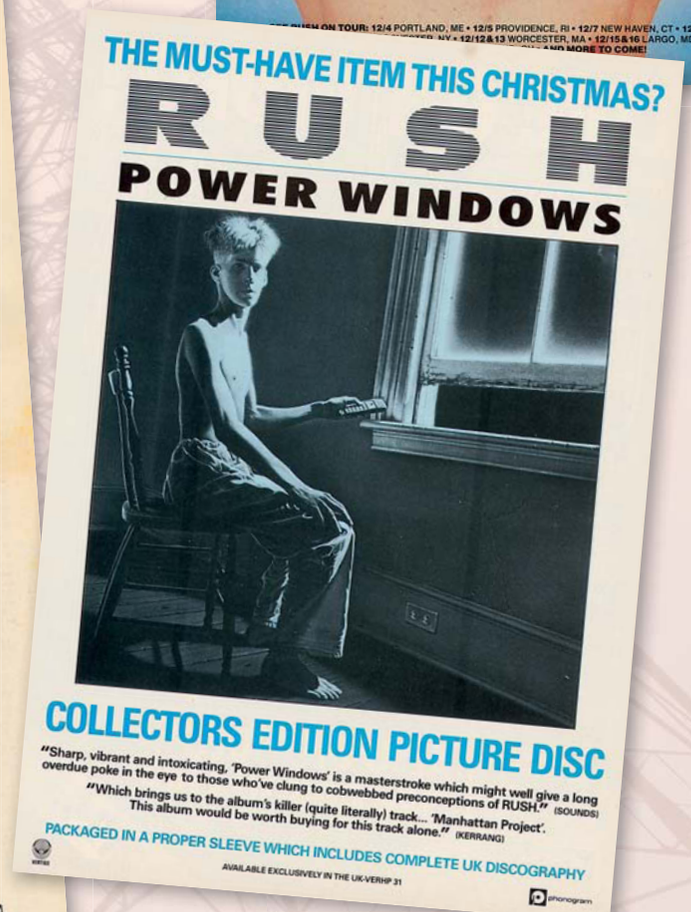
Peart's lyrics had never been more introspective than "Middletown Dreams," and never more concerned with the big picture than "Manhattan Project." Their themes sit at opposite poles of the human experience: wistful nostalgia for one's childhood versus concern for the entire human race's existence. It's big stuff, Peart communicating with his inimitable grace while Geddy, now comfortable in a midrange croon, delivers the drummer's sentiment with equal panache. Alex Lifeson performs well in a more background kind of role, coloring the keyboard-dominant compositions with oddly shaped guitar-generated textures, every now and then exploding with an inspired solo that reminds us how well he adapts to any given sonic situation.

Power Windows is a slow burner, but once it catches there are myriad discoveries to make. Hidden in the dense production are a variety of sounds that even the fussiest audiophile can appreciate, despite some of the synths sounding impossibly dated. Ultimately *Power Windows*, along with its successor, *Hold Your Fire*, is a grand authoritative stamp on yet another Rush phase. The band remained successful well into the '80s by keeping earnest in their mission, never totally surrendering to trends while still absorbing the tastes and tactics of the times.



with many interviews Neil conducted through the '80s, he was passionate about discussing lyrics and writing in general, a hobby soon to become a second vocation, beginning this journey first through his notes for Rush tour books, then low-key, self-published travel writing followed by a veritable mountain of personal memoir and travel journalism in the early 2000s.

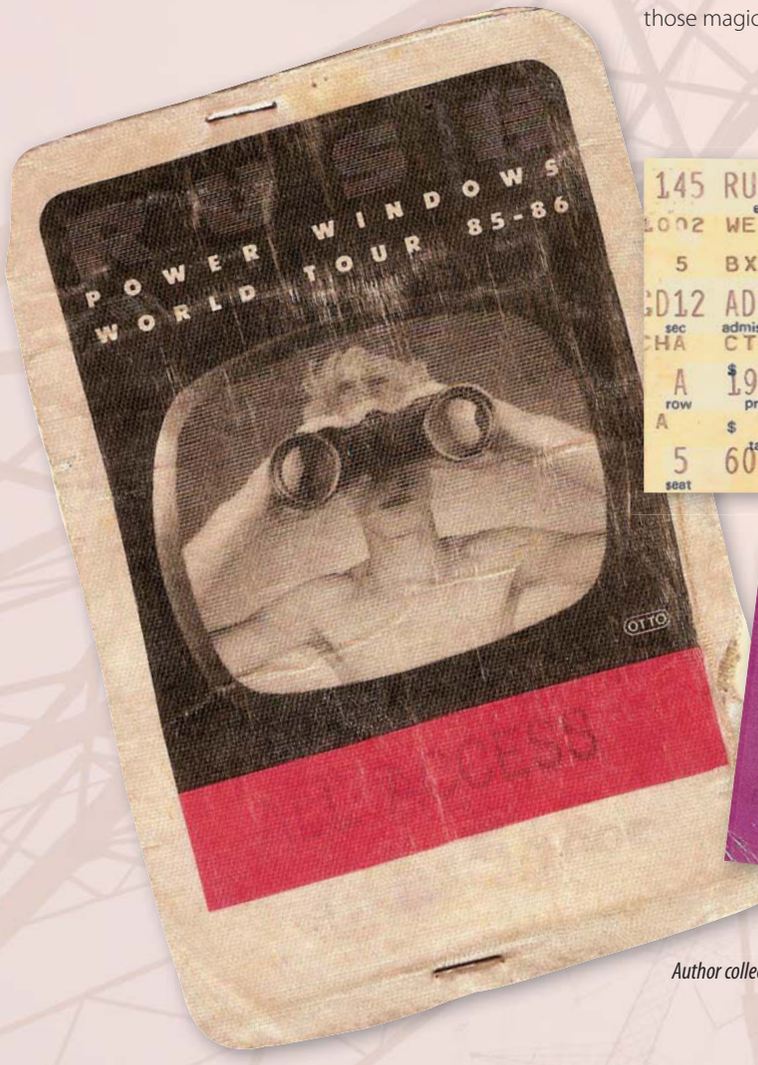
"A lot of people listen to 'Middletown Dreams' and in their interpretation of it, all those people fail," he explained. "And it has been reviewed as a song of bitter cynicism because I'm writing about people who are imprisoned in small towns and who will remain there all their lives. But that's the total opposite of what my meaning was. It was written in the spirit of tremendous compassion and with tremendous sadness and futility about human nature, and what was going on at the time, especially with the people who were close to me—watching the number of people who were out of work, the number of people who had problems with their health and their personal lives; people whose sensitivity was disciplined by their environment. A lot of stuff in there was ingredients of life as seen through the eyes and values of those people. I have to be realistic and I have to see the world as it is. So it's perhaps a cynical view of people while remaining idealistic about life. That's a hard line to walk, and it's hard to get those two views to coalesce. But it's the only way I can keep the values and the goals I want in life and maintain the way of living that I want, while at the same time [stay] in touch with reality and reconcile with what's going on in the world.



"In 'Marathon,'" Peart continued, "which is about the triumph of time and a kind of message to myself—because I think life is too short for all the things that I want to do—there's a self-admonition saying that life is long enough. You can do a lot—just don't burn yourself out too fast trying to do everything at once. 'Marathon' is a song about individual goals and trying to achieve them. And it's also about the old Chinese proverb: 'The journey of a thousand miles begins with one step.' I try to keep a linear process of growth in a lot of different directions in my life. A few years ago, when things were kind of overwhelming, I had a sense of just treading water—trying to keep afloat in all of what people were expecting me to do. Lately I have taken a lot more control of my life. And I keep progressing steadily along five different avenues, instead of trying to go off like a skyrocket in one direction."

Neil admonished writer Nick Krewen when he asked whether the band would ever return to its primary, basic sound. "What for? The last thing I'm interested in is going back. I think that's a terrible thing. To get nostalgic about other people's music, or even about your own, makes a terrible statement about the condition of your life and your prospects for the future. I have no patience with that kind of attitude, whether it's on radio or among friends. For instance, I think that anyone who thinks that 1970 was the best year in the world has a problem. For me, the older stuff just doesn't have that nostalgic appeal at all. I never have that feeling of, 'Gee, I wish we could recapture those magic moments,' because those magic moments weren't all that magic, if the truth be known."

Ray Wawrzyniak collection



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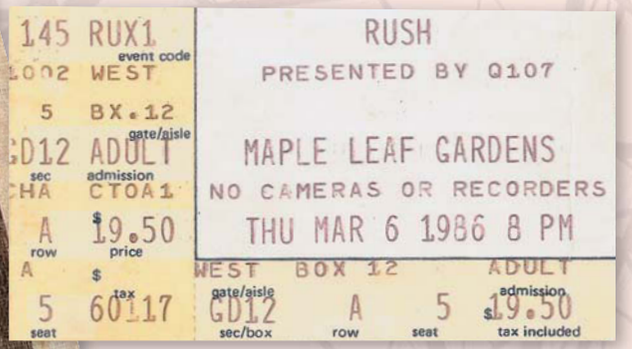

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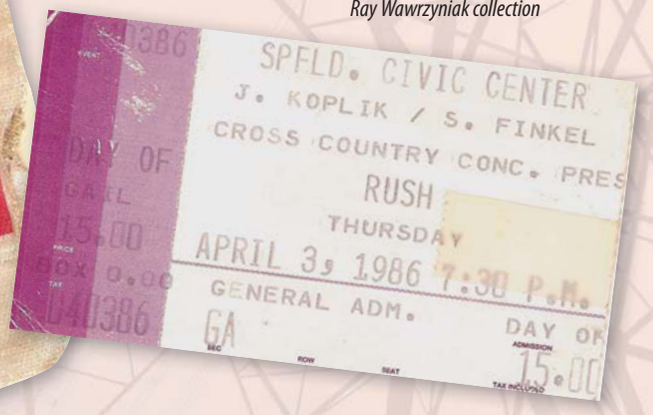

Author collection

Power Windows tour, Rosemont Horizon, Rosemont, Illinois, March 22,1986. © *Gene Ambo/Retna Ltd.*

Power Windows, fueled by the bright, percolating strains of "The Big Money," would perpetuate the band's flow of certifications, the album going gold then platinum in the space of three months, a success not attained by the record's follow-up. *Hold Your Fire*, issued September 8, 1987, stalled at gold, where it still sits today. And as with *Power Windows* (which cost $325,000 to construct), Rush spared no expense on what is perhaps their most keyboard-drossed album. *Hold Your Fire* was a belabored affair similarly recorded with Peter Collins at The Manor in England and at Air Studios in Montserrat, a money-burner of a locale made extinct in 1989 by Hurricane Hugo.

"I guess in our own minds we can afford that kind of luxury to keep ourselves fired up, you know, tuned up," figured Geddy, speaking to *Off the Record*'s Mary Turner. "Every three weeks we went to a different studio, and the first two studios were in England; the next one was in Montserrat, the Caribbean; the next one we went home for the first time in maybe ten years; we recorded three, four weeks in Toronto and we mixed the album in Paris; and, through all that time we were very stimulated and very interested in the record. It kept everybody fresh and I think it kept giving us a new outlook on the album; and we kept coming in contact with different responses and for us at this stage I think it works really well to do that, to move around. It is more expensive than your average way of recording, but we're very conscientious and I think the money we spend doing that we save in other ways. I think it gave us an international flavor; I don't know if the album,

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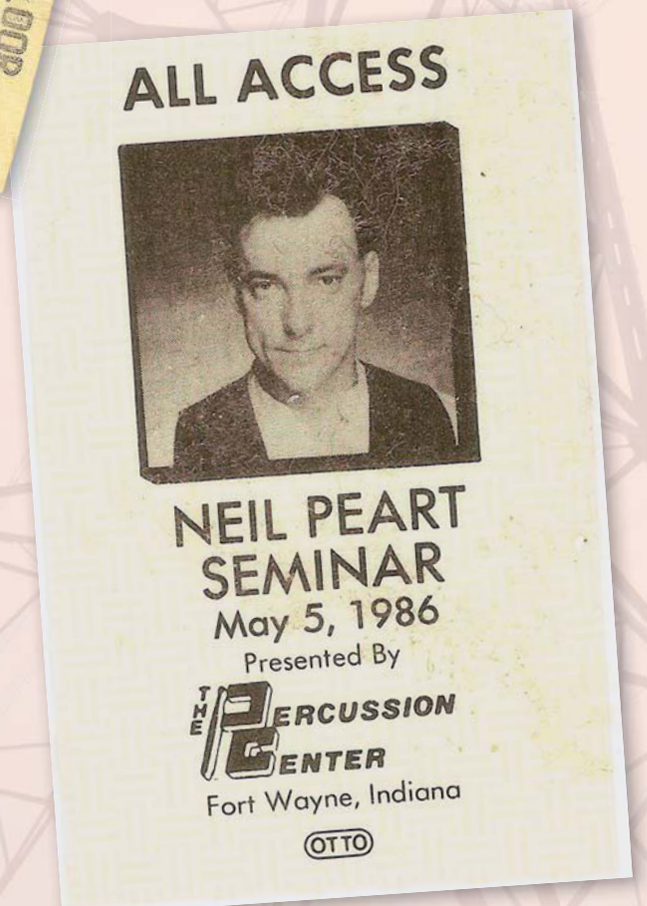

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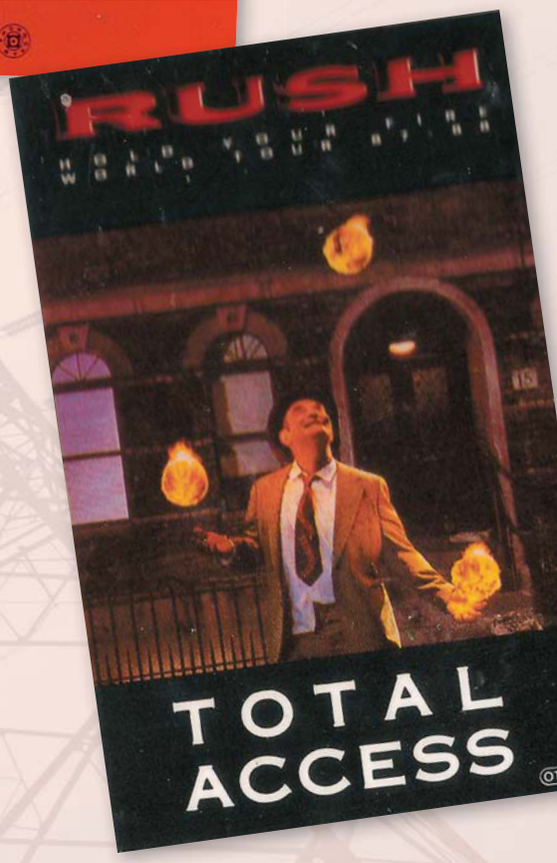


Ray Wawrzyniak collection

you know, smells of it or not but it certainly was great for us because it turns the work experience into a whole full living experience which I think is more necessary for us at this stage. You know, fifteen-odd years or whatever it's been in Rush, I think you have to stop looking at it as separate from your life because it's part of your life. It's what you do, so you don't wanna just go, 'I'm going to work and then I'll live.' That's the necessity for saying, 'Well, I could either mix at home or I can mix in this cheap studio around the corner; or I can go to Paris, spend a few extra dollars and have a wonderful new experience mixing, so I vote for the latter, you know? Let's have some fun."

Amplifying the complications with *Hold Your Fire* (from the electronic drum-generated rhythms to the myriad synths 'n' samples, to "Tai Shan," a song based on traditional Chinese music), was the fact that Neil was even writing lyrics on one of them new-fangled "personal" computers!

"Neil used it quite a lot," explained Geddy. "He wrote all his lyrics, or some of his lyrics for this album on the Mac; he finds it easy because he can then play with words, cut and paste and drop them out and look at it this way and print it out and look at it and see what works and what doesn't work. I found it difficult when he was starting to give me lyrics that were printed out of his computer because I'm so used to his little handwritten lyric sheets that he gives me, 'cause they're always so cool and he draws these little pictures on the top of them and stuff; he has, for like thirteen years now. So, I think it was 'Prime Mover' or 'Lock

and Key' on this album, which was the first one he actually handed me this, you know, printout of the lyrics and it was so weird, it felt so cold to me; it's like, 'I feel uncomfortable with this' and I think he just looked around for different fonts until he found one that was a little warmer and it was more attractive to me. Makes his job much easier."

And the title *Hold Your Fire*? "I think it relates to the creative process," said Geddy, "the burning desire to do something and how important it is to keep your fire lit, and to keep it going regardless of what you have to persevere, regardless of circumstances. I think it's important to hold yourself together or stick to your guns basically. It's more relating to the personal inner flame—you know, hold it—as the beginning of the song 'Mission' sort of explains. That was the intent and the concept of that particular song and the title of the album."

"I think we believe that every album is gonna be the one that's gonna die on us," said Neil. "Something like *Power Windows* was an especial risk because we used Peter Collins to produce it and also adopted quite a different set of aesthetics than previously. We threw open a lot of barriers and overproduced it like crazy. It could have died. Even *Hold Your Fire* wasn't something we felt sure about, because you can so easily get disappointed."

Hold Your Fire would be Rush's first album since *Hemispheres* not to crack the Top 10, losing momentum at No. 13, still a respectable showing no doubt fueled in part by the success of the pop-shimmery "Time Stand Still," Aimee Mann guest vocal and arch-'80s music video notwithstanding. *Hold Your Fire* would also be the last album under the band's deal with Mercury. Larger rival Atlantic would take over on records controversial enough to cleave the fan base into armed encampments based on the eras or phases that supposedly represented "the real Rush."

Courtesy Wyco Vintage/www.wycovintage.com

Author collection

HOLD YOUR FIRE

Jeff Wagner

Rush's twelfth album was the final in their third cycle, a cycle that might as well be called the digital years. Despite a plethora of synths and other artificialities, *Hold Your Fire* has a kind of warmth not present on predecessor *Power Windows*. It's also got a friendlier, more welcoming tone. *Hold Your Fire* is basically the *Power Windows* template improved and refined. In retrospect, it sounds much less dated than its predecessor, although a couple of band members' haircuts during the period were still questionable. . . .

Where the synths on *Power Windows* were brittle and cold, one year later they're glowing and lush, woven into the band's guitar/bass/drums framework with a fine seamlessness. And where the drums themselves are concerned, this album is not only remarkable as one of Peart's most inspired performances, but as his best-sounding digital-era album, the drums less plastic than on *Power Windows* and fuller than they would be on successor album, *Presto*.

Song-wise, *Hold Your Fire* runs the gamut, offering the bouncy pop of opener "Force Ten" and the even brighter shine of "Time Stand Still" (given extra dimension by the vocals of 'Til Tuesday's Aimee Mann) to more complex material "Open Secrets" and "Prime Mover" to highly textured, moodier pieces such as "Mission" and "Tai Shan." Quintessential Rush (quintessential for their digital years, anyway) comes in the form of the instantly likable "Lock and Key" and the hopeful "Turn the Page."

And *Hold Your Fire*'s most impressive aspect? Alex Lifeson and his Wacky Arsenal of Stealthy Cosmic Guitar Weirdness. Since *Signals*, Lifeson had been searching for his musical voice in a Rush whose synths had become both the compositional and aesthetic focus. Three albums later he manages to apply an almost avant-garde approach to what are basically tightly written tunes, some of them Rush's simplest up to this point (but even in this guise, Rush's simple stuff was more complex than most bands could manage). His leads in songs such as "Open Secrets" and "Lock and Key" are sheer "How did he even think of that?!" squiggles of wonder, while his rhythm work is beautifully stealthy, performed by a guitarist who understands that playing to the strengths of the song is infinitely more productive than showing off his talents.

A band in perpetual flux will eventually offer albums like *Hold Your Fire*, albums that don't win over their audience immediately, but may take several years for people to understand. It was their first album since 1975's *Caress of Steel* not to sell platinum shortly after release. Clearly some fans weren't ready for Rush 1987, a Rush that didn't have much in common with days-of-yore stuff like *2112* or even *Permanent Waves*, other than the three adventurers who created it. Over time, however, *Hold Your Fire* feels like one of the great sleepers in the Rush catalog, one that many fans are finally ready to absorb for what it is rather than what they wanted it to be. Many of the album's songs take a long time to catch, but once they do, they're inescapably infectious. *Hold Your Fire*, in all its brightness and optimism, remains Rush's most multicolored presentation from their digital period—really nothing like the bland, monochromatic smear of red on the album cover.

"It becomes a series of experimentations, and like all experimentations, there are failures and there are successes, and looking back, I can judge them objectively. But all of them went somewhere. Even the failures taught us something as far as what not to do, in terms of the band anyway. It wasn't like we were sidemen trying to please someone else. I wasn't working in the studios doing jingles."

—Neil Peart, quoted by William F. Miller, *Modern Drummer*, 1989

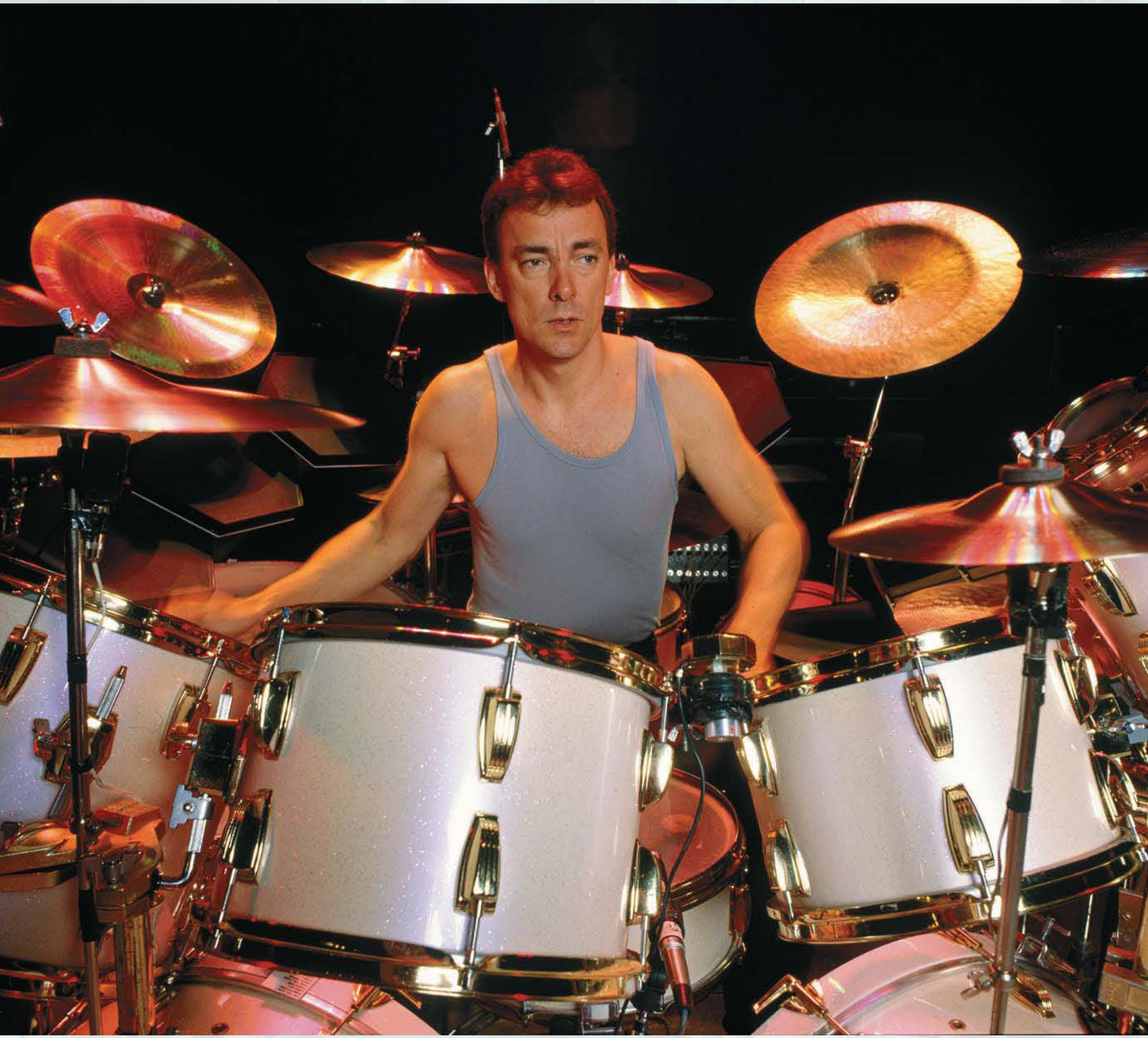
1989–1992

POP GOES RUSH

AFTER THE TIME-HONORED SYMBOLISM of closing out a creative phase with a live album—namely January 1989's *A Show of Hands*—Rush underscored the shift to new climes by quitting Peter Collins, their producer of two records, and opting for an equally incongruous choice in Rupert Hine for what would be the band's thirteenth album. It was essentially a mutual downer for Rush and Collins. The latter felt that, given *Hold Your Fire*'s anemic sales, he'd let down the band and felt for the sake of his own career and for Rush's, they should get someone else. Geddy could only agree.

Change of a more abstract nature was afoot as well. The six-month tour for *Hold Your Fire* almost did the band in. Geddy was sick most of the time, family relations had suffered, and the increasing technological challenge of carting around so much gear had each member of the band quietly daydreaming about a life without Rush.

Roll the Bones tour, Shoreline Amphitheater, Mountain View, California, May 31, 1992. *Tim Mosenfelder/ImageDirect/Getty Images*

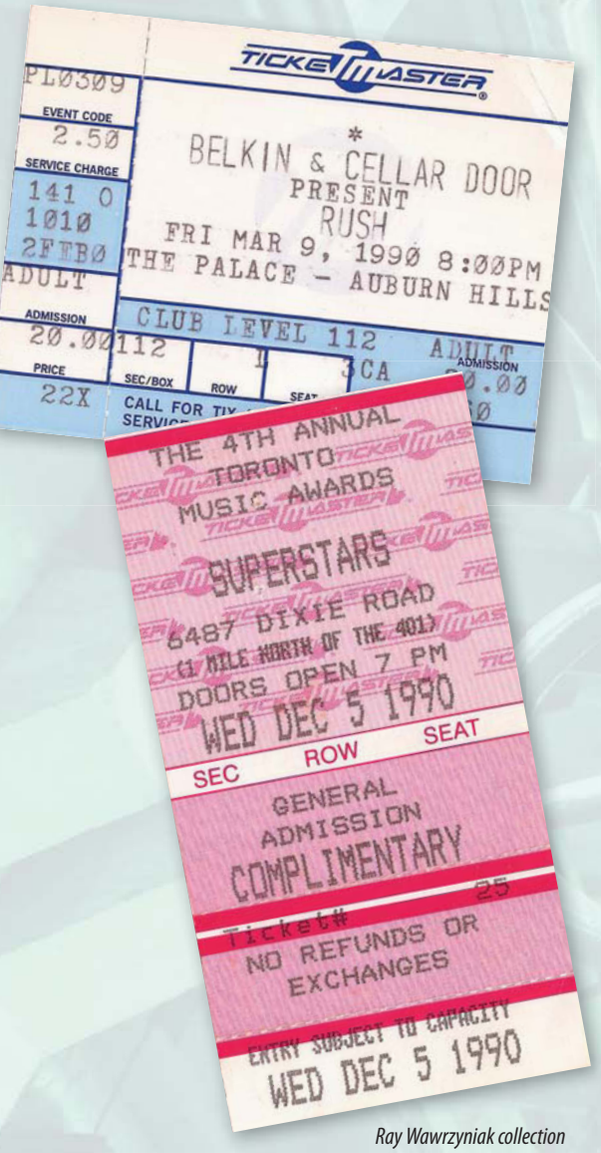


Neil photographed circa 1990. *Mick Hutson/ Redferns/Getty Images*

Rush would be saved by a well-earned six months away, a time in which, as Neil put it, the guys "got to know ourselves and our families once again." Part of the reason this could happen was that *A Show of Hands* was the last record the band owed to Mercury, with neither the label nor band all that enthused about renewing the partnership. Cliff Burnstein was long gone, and no other prominent champion of the band had stepped to the fore to help sell the Rush of the '80s. Val Azzoli had left SRO for Atlantic, commandeering the band over to the much larger imprint. Rush was partly won over by the charm of legendary company head Ahmet Ertegun and by the label's reputation as artist-oriented despite its size.

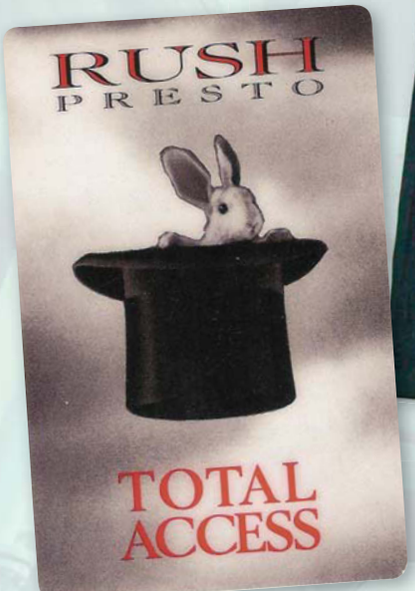
Recording what would become *Presto* was a summer-long affair, again at Le Studio, with the album emerging November 21 of that year. Rush had in fact first expressed interest in working with Rupert Hine back in the scramble to replace Steve Lillywhite on *Grace Under Pressure*, Neil in particular being a champion of Rupert's three solo albums from that period. When Hine heard the band for the first time in rehearsal, he struggled to see what he could add to the detailed, almost finished new songs. However, he did express surprise that one of the greatest power trios of all time had been so "smothered" in keyboards as of late. All four vowed to correct for this in the upcoming sessions, which went quickly, the band whacking the album together in three months from June through August 1989 (after having booked the studio for six), followed by a mix in England. Keyboards were nonetheless still part of the palette, to the particular consternation of Alex, who endured the nitpicking analysis of his guitar parts by both band mates throughout the *Presto* sessions.

The live set *A Show of Hands* was the last record the band owed Mercury, with neither party all that enthused about renewing the partnership.



Ray Wawrzyniak collection

"It was kind of a reactionary record for me," mused Geddy, shortly after the album was done and the band was on the road for what was to be a short tour by Rush standards, mid-February through the end of June. "This record was a reaction against five years of being involved with synthesizers and drum machines and computer writing tools, and sequencers and samplers. I think we were kind of, like, up to our eyebrows with all that technology, and by the end of the last tour, I felt like I was kind of trapped, a victim of my own design. Alex felt a bit of that too, because so much of my keyboard responsibilities were overspilling to his side of the stage. He was having to do more and more to give me a break, so I could play more bass. He was doing more keyboard stuff. We became so locked into this thing that when it came time to take a break from it, we took a good long break after releasing the live album, and I really think we reacted against it. We didn't want to put ourselves in that trap again. We had this rebellious kind of spirit and a little anger, which is really healthy. We said, screw it, let's do a rock record. Let's try to do a record that pulls the trio back into focus, and have more fun with it. I think that was really the goal, and the first song that we wrote for the record was 'Show Don't Tell.' It really set us off, because it was exactly what we talked about doing. That song accomplished exactly what our frustrations led to. We said, 'OK, here's this track,' and we went with it, and we got off so much listening back to it, that we just kept going in that direction. There were a couple of tunes that, for variety's sake, we started falling into saying, 'Let's throw a few more keyboards here; let's not be ridiculous. We know how to use all these colors; let's have some in this song.' So we didn't completely ignore it, and I think for dynamics it's good to have that, to be able to go to it, but generally the attitude was, let's keep technology and use it to make backdrops for us, and let's keep the trio a little more up front."



Both author collection

PRESTO

Martin Popoff

Most memorable from Kim Mitchell in the Rush movie *Beyond the Lighted Stage* was his sticking up for the "pretty Rush," and by that he meant all these maligned miniature origami pop songs from sort of *Hold Your Fire* through *Roll the Bones*.

Presto represents the best—or worst, depending on your level of angry metalhead-ness, mine being sky-high—example of the band's pursuit of pop structure, accompanied by histrionic, high-tuned drums, rainy guitars, clarion keys, and up-front, plainly stated singing from Geddy, who does indeed call this a Rush album with uncommon attention to singing. By that he must mean using the low, comfortable end of his range so that he can in fact do something closer to singing, rather than hard rock howling and yelping (which is here in large quantity, again, for better or worse).

Aiding this aim is the curious production knobjob of one Rupert Hine, far from an obvious choice to produce a Rush album. But since breaking with the best, Terry Brown, Rush has constantly bestowed upon producers the role of spurring them on to change, variety, oddity, often for change's sake and not necessarily for successful creative results, as is generally agreed upon up in regard to *Presto* by most fans and, heck, by Neil himself.

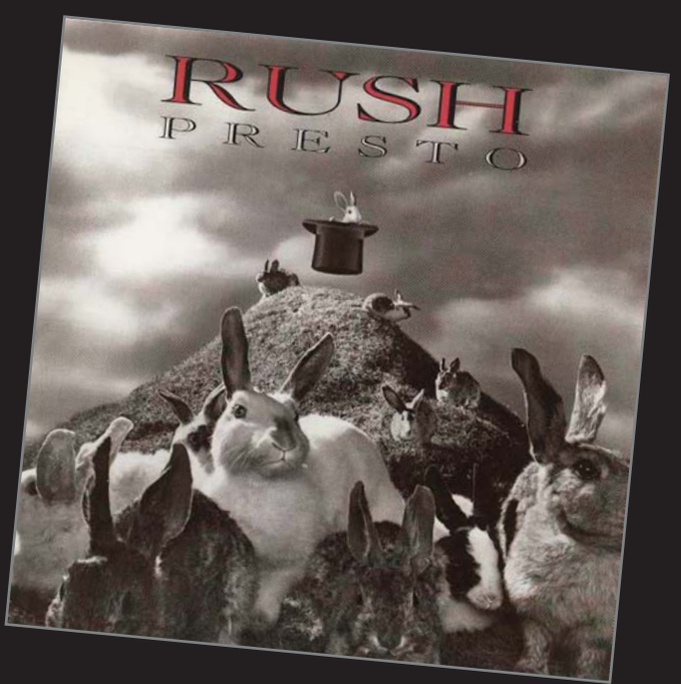
Hine was brought on because Peter Collins couldn't or wouldn't do it. The results are pretty much what Peter would have given them anyway. Sure, the idea was to put keyboards aside, but that idea flew out the window (for all their pride in change, Rush changes incrementally and with trepidation), and the result was really very little material difference from a Peter Collins Rush record.

Presto's biggest songs were "Superconductor," "Show Don't Tell," and "The Pass." "Superconductor" is one of those frustrating Rush songs written heavy enough, but then so botched by production and mix that you wind up just not caring. Still, when it hit radio, we angry metalhead Rush fans found ourselves politely clapping because there was a riff, plus a chorus that was brisk and bracing like those slaps of aftershave on TV commercials of the '70s. "Show Don't Tell" was also a radio staple, the band managing to make a convoluted jammy instrumental passage into a true hook, something hard to get out of one's head, especially if that hooked fish was a drummer. The whole thing was, in fact, an interesting song wracked with an eccentric, dynamic arrangement, ultimately a track worthy of kick-start position on this weak tea record.

"The Pass" represents a weird situation in which Geddy keeps telling us how good it is, so the band plays it a lot live, and now it just can't be ignored. Looking for the positive, it's a pretty passionate stacked set of melodies for Rush, resulting in a song that is hooky for the usual reasons.

Elsewhere, man, what is left are just a bunch of generally forgotten catalog songs that the band painfully kills with trendy sonics, from Alex's acoustic and only lightly electric strummery, to the worst of dated keyboard sounds, right down to performances from Neil that seem too busy for such malnourished skeletons.

Sharp-edged, twee, Fixx-ed to the point of INXS, *Presto* is the work of a band desperately wanting to participate in an arty post-punk zone, bored and fatigued by too many years mining hard rock an' progressive rock. And yet . . . it's a good couple or three records into that idea, so in effect, they are just persisting in something started, dang, halfway through *Grace Under Pressure*. Takeaway from all this, then? Well, maybe it's the idea that the band are hammering away at more of the same, problem being that the guys, with their specific range of talents, weren't exactly suited to swim in these waters in the first place. Of course, Rush, with all that restless creative ambition, couldn't care less. If they are excited about a type of music, they're pretty much unafraid to learn on the job, and *Presto* is definitely the work of a band still learning how to write pop, which in and of itself is not as worthy a cause as they may have thought at the time.

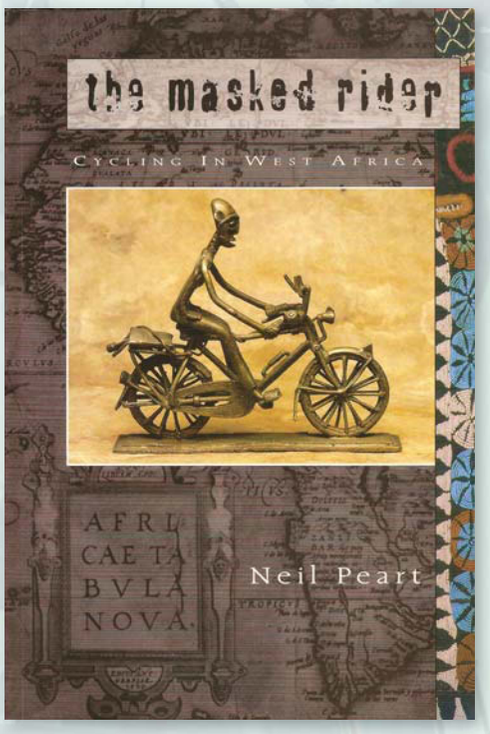


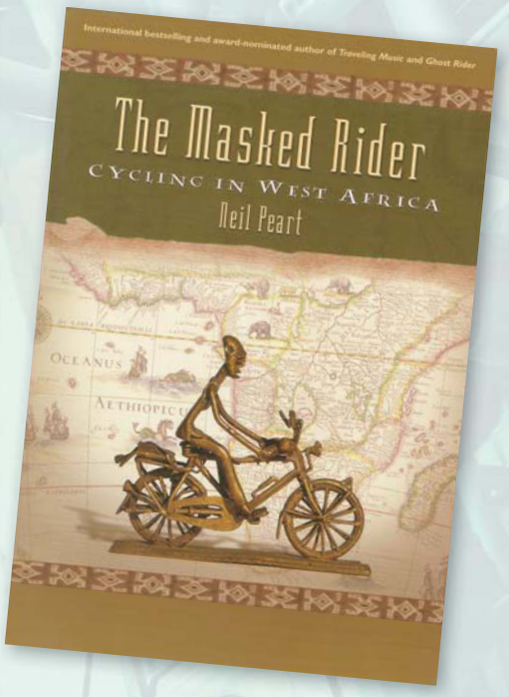
But from flash single "Superconductor" and "The Pass," durable, poignant, and long a band favorite, to "Chain Lightning" and "Red Tide," *Presto* proved itself the work of a "power" trio immune to the idioms of metal, metal being one logical result of a band comprising bass, guitar, and drums. Geddy's playing is taut, midrange-y, and clacky, whereas Alex is alternately acoustic and wiry of electrics, Lifeson at least famously vowing to stay away from the chorus effect. Neil's playing was similarly perky and poppy, his language expanded to include further explorations of ska plus some of the rhythms he had soaked in during his bicycle travels in Africa from the last long break, travels that resulted in his first published book, *Masked Rider: Cycling in West Africa*.

In general terms, yes, *Presto* was a reaction against too much keyboard, but it has also been framed by Geddy as an album more about vocals, Rupert requesting of Geddy, as a condition of taking the project, essentially to croon in lower registers across the board and leave his heavy metal squeak at home. "A lot of the music was melodically written, and the vocal melodies came first on a lot of these songs," confirmed Lee. "The bass nuances were one of the last things in the rhythm section being put together, so, I had no idea what would happen when it came time to reproduce all those things."

Presto was also a record about the tasteful architecture of smart songwriting, and not so much time-honored Rush characteristics like odd time signatures. "They're still in there," noted Geddy. "There may not be as many. I think the transitions are a lot more subtle now, so that we can slip into it without it sounding awkward. It's funny to hear people react to a song like 'Superconductor.' The verses are all in seven, but it doesn't feel like it, because Neil plays across the seven. We're so comfortable with some of those time signatures that we can just slip into them, or slip into them for a moment. But, there's probably not as many as

Opposite: Presto tour, Nassau Coliseum, Uniondale, New York, April 22, 1990. *Steve Eichner/WireImage/ Getty Images*





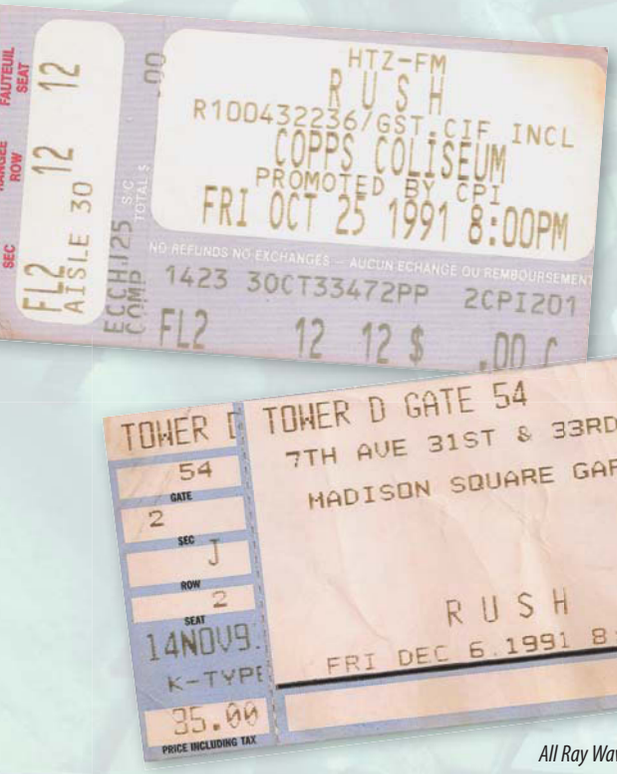
Extensive bicycle travels in Africa resulted in Neil's first published book, *Masked Rider: Cycling in West Africa*.

Opposite: Presto tour, The Spectrum, Philadelphia, April 27, 1990. *Steve Trager photo/Frank White Photo Agency*

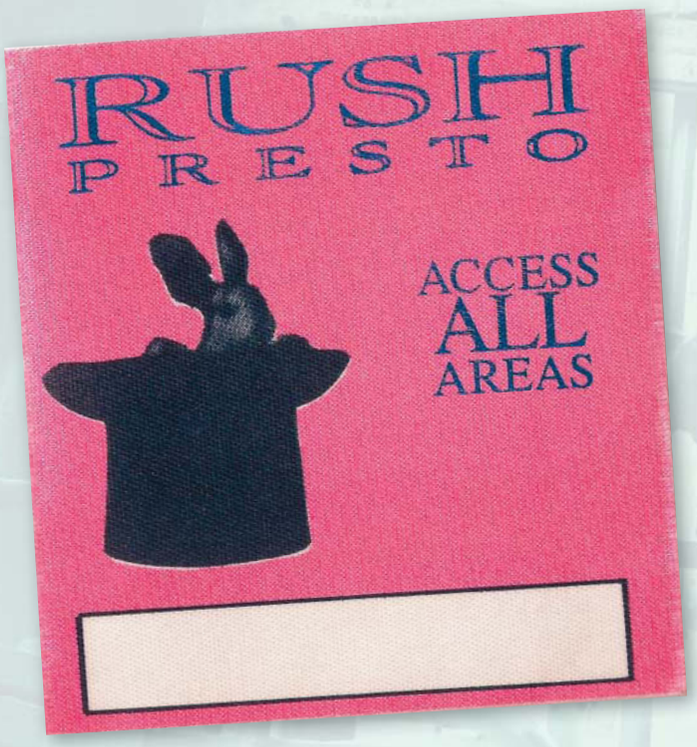
there used to be. They're probably not as obvious. We used to try to be very obvious when we went into a time change. We would announce it musically, somehow. 'Here comes the time change'—boom! 'This is hard to play'—here! And now, we just worry about making the song work, and if it feels good in a seven, then we'll play it in a seven. As long as it feels good. It's actually a shift in priority. We're not so determined to prove anything. I guess we got a lot of that out of our system. I still think of it as a kind of personal victory when a song gets touted as something that the masses may like and I know there's an odd time signature in there. It was like when 'Spirit of Radio' got a lot of airplay, years ago, and there's a couple of passages of seven there. I think that's great. If you can sneak an odd time on the radio, that's really a good thing."

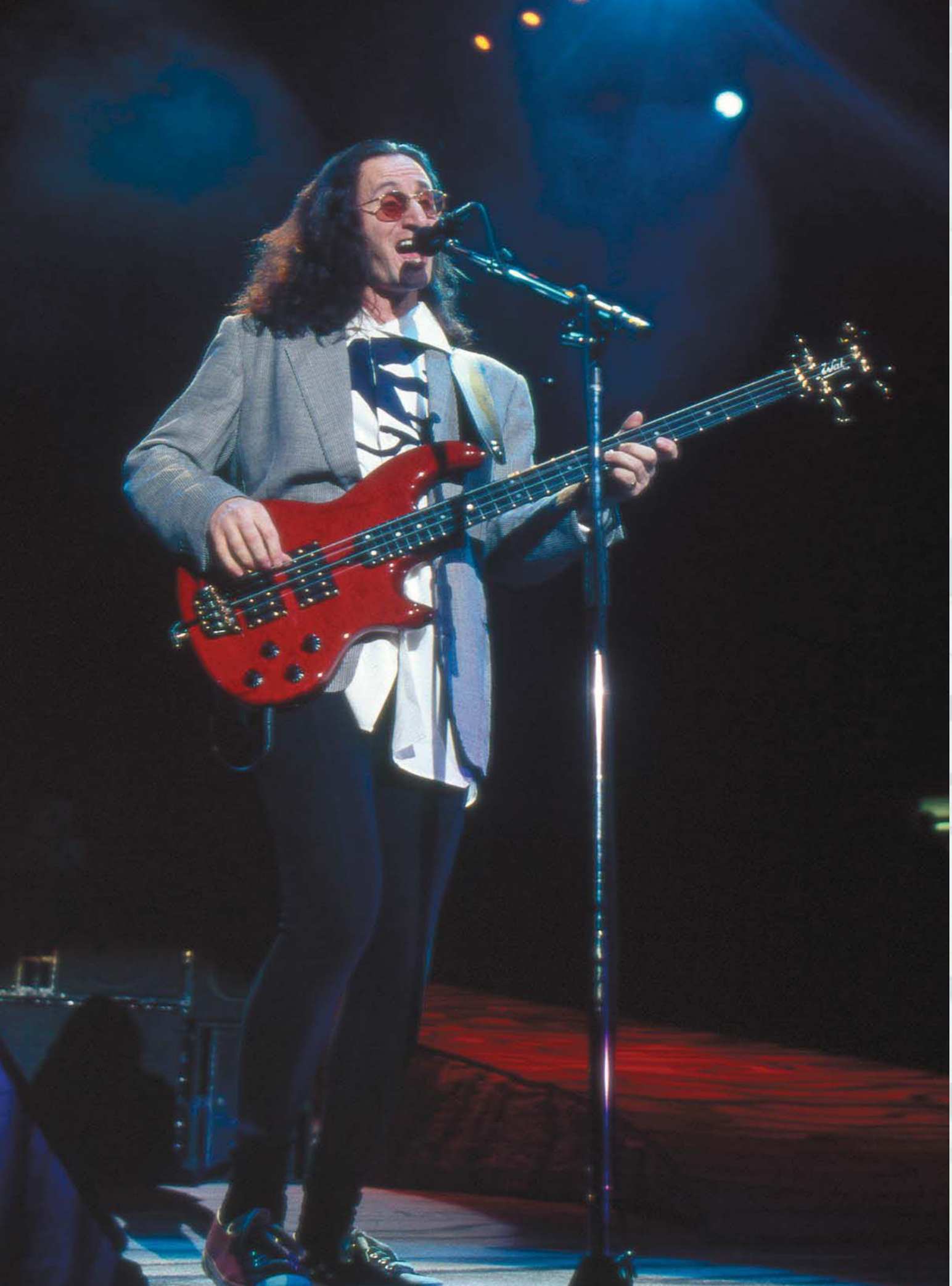
Neil's lyrics are well matched to *Presto*'s immediate, succinct musical mien, a vibe perfectly captured by the name of the record, one that was voted down as a good title for the double that became *A Show of Hands*. "So I went and wrote a song called 'Presto' and knew at that point that we had at least an album title to work with," noted Peart. "I was conscious that maybe a couple of the last albums were a little on the heavy side, lyrically speaking. With *Presto* I took a little looser approach to things. These songs have their own stories and messages without necessarily being linked by some overall theme. If there is an identifiable lyrical trait here, it's my use of irony, which is injected by acting a character out through the lyrics. For example, in 'Hand Over Fist' there are two people walking down the street arguing, and the lead character is saying things which are supposed to be ironic.

"We can't be more creative than locking ourselves away in a farmhouse," continued Peart, referring to a methodology that had become dependable over the years, as far back as *Hemispheres*. "I know there is such a thing as inspiration, but I know how to take advantage of it. When we're not rehearsing or writing, I collect ideas and prepare myself for when we do start writing. By the time we're ready to work on a new album, I'm fully prepared. I've got pages and pages of notes to work from. Call us efficient, call us



All Ray Wawrzyniak collection



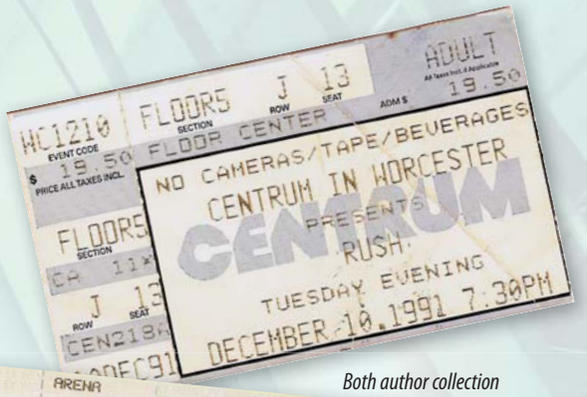


mechanical. The point is, when we have to get something done, it's done. That's the only way we know how to work. Maybe we're exceptional in that way. To our mind this is simply being professional."

Three moderately successful singles—"The Pass," "Superconductor," and, most famously, prog-inflected album opener "Show Don't Tell"—helped Rush take their first Atlantic album beyond gold status and to a No. 20 position on the album chart. But one can't help think that the band's life-balancing decision toward less touring—*Presto* marked the fourth tour in a row with no European dates—held the record back, not that the band (fully aware of what they were doing) particularly lamented the result. One wonders if they would have stayed on the road longer had they gone through with very serious plans to add a touring keyboard player, a happenstance that would have uncluttered Geddy's mind considerably.

Still, the happy tenor of Rush's next project is illustrated by the fact that the band eagerly ended a break to start working on ideas for their next record, another Rupert Hine production and another that made use of Chalet Studio for writing sessions and Le Studio for laying down tracks. Punctuated by beer-fueled late-night volleyball games cheered on by the lake's voracious mosquito population, the album got made quickly, Rupert finding ways to keep Alex spontaneous in his soloing, even if it meant Frankensteining the demo tracks onto the finals.

Opposite: Roll the Bones tour, Madison Square Garden, New York City, December 6, 1991. © *Frank White*



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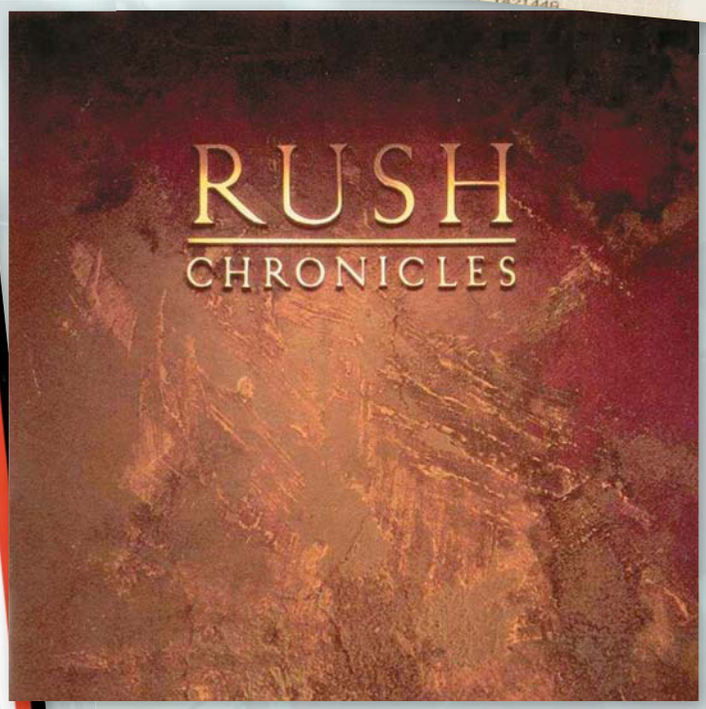


A Show of Hands may have been the last record the band owed Mercury, but it was far from the last Rush album issued by the label. The compilation entitled *Chronicles* was assembled without the band and released in September 1990.

Presto tour, Los Angeles, 1990. *Artist: Michael Dole*

Roll the Bones, issued September 3, 1991, also benefited from a vigorous conceptual base, the role of chance in life, as well as a cool album cover by Hugh Syme interpreting the "roll the bones" theme in his typically austere and upmarket manner.

"It just came out of nowhere, honestly," explained Neil, on the record's thematic thrust. "Suddenly, it struck me. Then I started thinking about it more and realizing how many wildcards there are in each of our lives and how you're faced with a choice—just like in a card game. You can be dealt the wildcard and you can turn it down—or you can jump on it. That's part of the 'roll the bones' aspect, too. When opportunity knocks, do you answer or do you pretend you're asleep? Even when luck comes your way, you have a choice how you respond to it."

"*Roll the Bones* is the perfect title," Neil further explained during a separate chat at Anthem headquarters, "because through all the thoughts that I go through on the album about all these nasty things that happen and all these terrible things that could happen to you—a drunk in a stolen car could run over you on the way home tomorrow night and you can have the best laid plans in the world for what you want to do, but there's still that element of chance that it could all go wrong. But the bottom line of that is to take the chance, roll the bones. If it's a random universe and that's terrifying and it makes you neurotic and everything, never mind. You really have to take the chance or else *nothing's* going to happen. The bad thing might not happen, but the good thing won't either, so that's really the only chance you have."

Author collection

Courtesy Wyco Vintage/www.wycovintage.com

ROLL THE BONES

Richard Bienstock

"Why are we here? Because we're here," asks (and answers) Geddy Lee in the chorus of the title track to 1991's *Roll the Bones*. It's an uncharacteristically plainspoken sentiment from a band not generally given to the succinct or straightforward in lyric or music. But *Roll the Bones* was Rush at the dawn of a new decade and captured a band in transition.

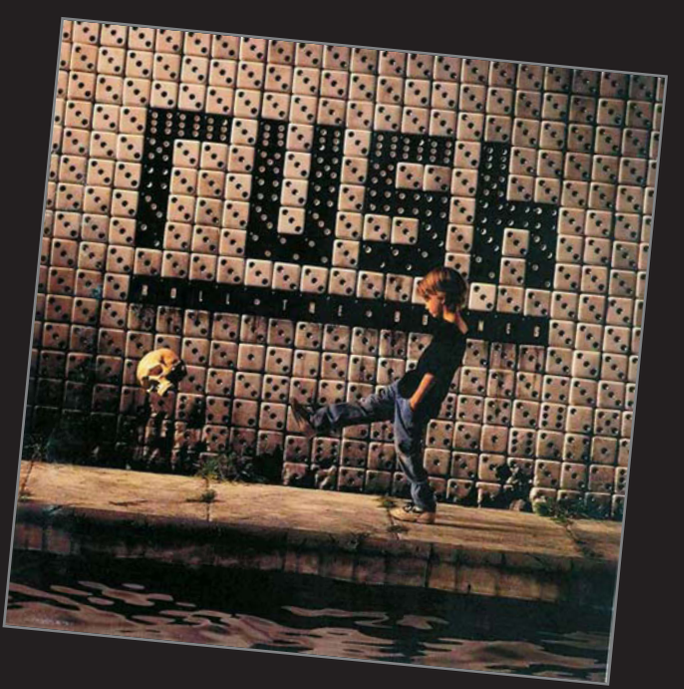
It would be a stretch to posit that, with *Bones*, Rush had anticipated the sea change in '90s rock that grunge and alternative music would bring about (and to be honest, they still seem a bit "band-out-of-time" here; in retrospect, this is not quite what you remember hard rock to have sounded like in 1991). But there is something of a reflection of the era within the tone of the album. In his lyrics, Neil Peart wasn't only moving away from the ornate but also toward the more weighty and somber: "All the pain and suffering/who will pay?" Peart (through Lee) posits in the Cold War lament "Heresy," while the protagonist in "Neurotica" hides in his shell "as the world goes to hell." "You Bet Your Life," meanwhile, charts the various descents of junkies, losers, and even the winner "pour[ing] his life down the drain." There's much death and discontent coursing through *Bones*, to be sure, and it is all rendered more forthrightly and with considerable less use of metaphor than, say, the maple and oak bludgeoning by "hatchet, axe, and saw" that ran rampant in "The Trees."

That said, for all its verbal turmoil *Roll the Bones* is musically brightly hued and more upbeat than its predecessor, *Presto*. Slower numbers like "Bravado" and the aforementioned "Heresy" still shimmer and sparkle, and the album's many uptempo tracks—"Face Up," "The Big Wheel," and the forceful yet nimble opener "Dreamline," in particular—exhibited, at the time at least, Rush at their most rocking in years.

Indeed, *Roll the Bones* was another stride down a road the band began traveling on *Presto*—a turn away from the synth-heavy sound that characterized Rush's post–*Moving Pictures* work and back toward a more guitar-centric *modus operandi*. Said Lee at the time, "There seems to be more of a three-piece approach again and a bit more of a hard edge to it." And while it should be noted that, as on *Presto*, keyboards still have a heavy (if less domineering) presence, and the guitar tones are not quite as thick and brawny as they would become as the decade wore on, *Roll the Bones* was a clear line in the sand between the Rush of the '80s and the band that they would become in the new decade. That point was further punctuated by 1989's live *A Show of Hands*, which gathered a set list composed almost entirely of the band's post-*Pictures* '80s output and in effect summed up the era, and 1990's definitive double-CD retrospective *Chronicles*, which served as a sort of clearinghouse for everything Rush. By the time *Bones* came along the slate had, in a sense, been wiped clean.

Of course, with every leap forward there's bound to be a few missteps. And *Roll the Bones* certainly has a few, most noticeably in the bizarre and brittle funk-rock workout "Where's My Thing? (Part IV, 'Gangster of Boats' Trilogy)," a disjointed piece that feels wholly out of place among its fellow compositions and delivers on none of the proggy promise inherent in hearing the words "Rush instrumental." And then there's the title track's extended rap section, which is downright weird in all sorts of ways. For obvious starters, Geddy Lee *raps*, and also he rhymes *zodiac* with *polyester slacks* and, um, *gluteus max*. That his voice is modulated down in pitch for a peculiar and somewhat creepy effect hardly helps matters. Finally, the whole thing goes on for just way too long.

What was Rush thinking? Damned if I know. But perhaps it's best to return once again to the title track's chorus to glean some wisdom here: "Why does it happen? Because it happens." Roll the bones. . . .



HENTRON

"When we went in to do *Presto*, everybody was fired up," Alex recalled. "There was a whole new enthusiasm. Then, while we were at dinner one night, Neil said, 'Well, I guess we have to talk about doing a tour,' and we all thought, 'Oh, no!' We all enjoy playing live, but it's the touring that becomes boring and tedious, and it seems harder with every year. But that tour went great for us—it was by far the best tour we'd ever done. We had a really good time—the pacing was great, and the personnel were great—everything was fun again. We did a little shorter run than on some other tours, which left us wanting to do more. We could have done another month or so, but we felt the wanting of doing more and carrying that into our next record was more important than squeezing in more dates.

"When we went in to write *Roll the Bones*," continued Lifeson, "everybody was fired up again, and we had that additional step along in our enthusiasm. We really regard this record as a rebirth for Rush. Now, we don't look at just the next record—we're looking at three, four, or five records into the future. I think we're going to be around a long time. Now that we've had a chance to record a lot of records, it's become an art for us, really. We're

Opposite: Roll the Bones tour, Madison Square Garden, New York City, December 6, 1991. *© Frank White*

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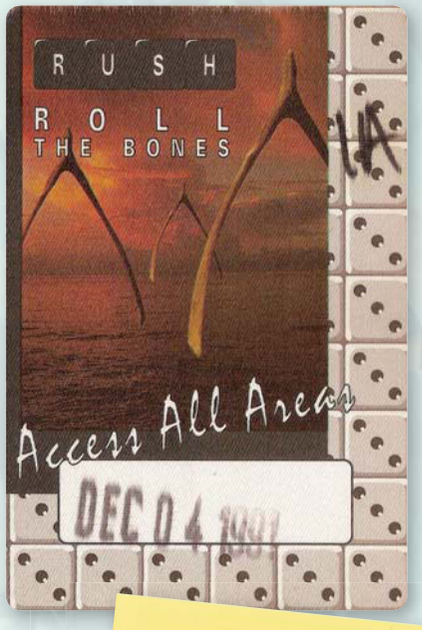


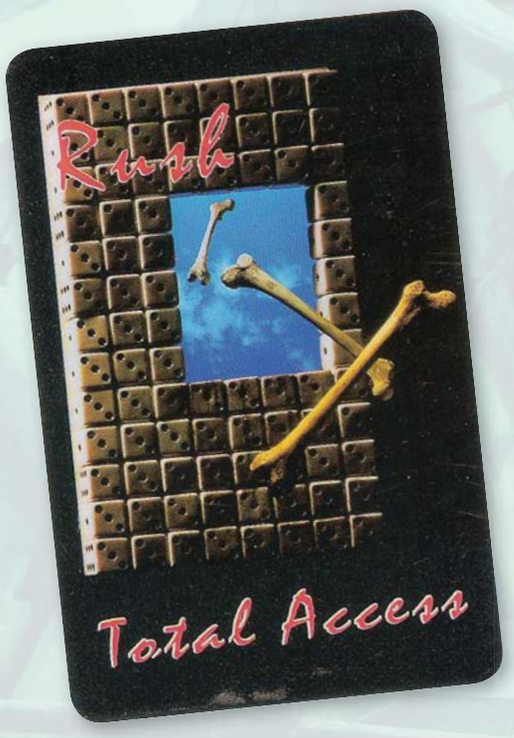
Ray Wawrzyniak collection

Canadian Musician contest ad, 1991. *Author collection*

learning to do it better in terms of songwriting, preproduction, preparation . . . everything. We took two months less on this record than we did on the past few records—definitely since *Grace Under Pressure*. I mean, we're happy if we finish a couple of days early, or if we're on time, that's a relief. But to finish two months ahead is just unheard of for us. I take pride in our preproduction for how efficient it's become, so our recording has become a very positive thing. With this record, we went straight into recording after writing and rehearsing it instead of taking the time off. It wasn't supposed to come out until January, but since we finished early we moved everything up a couple of months. Now that we feel rejuvenated and better about everything, we're looking forward to this tour."

Proving that there's no such thing as bad publicity, Rush took a lot of stick for the off-the-cuff rap thrown into the break (dance?) section of *Roll the Bones*' title track. Suddenly, fans were throwing their hands in the air saying that their favorite band had gone rap, with critics calling it a play for cool gone wrong. In any event, it caused much talk, as did the palpable spring in the step of driving opener "Dreamline" and Grammy-nominated instrumental "Where's My Thing?," which lost out to Eric Johnson, ironically Rush's warm-up act on the opening leg of the album's tour. Also raising eyebrows was the fact that Rush notched a platinum record this time out, while the previous two records had stalled at gold.

Was it the guitars that got people excited again? Alex could only hope. "With *Presto*, we decided that the guitar was going to play a more predominant role again and that the keyboards were going to go on second and it was going to be fuller enhancements for the coloring of the song rather than to play a major fanatic role," the guitarist said. "And even more so with *Roll the Bones* so the guitar comes up a little bit more and I think this is probably a direction that we'll continue because I think we've realized that the core of the band is drums, bass, and guitar. And that's really what the important elements are and that's really what should be developed. Feels better to me and it's the same for the other guys. They all say the same thing. Having a guitar up there . . . I mean there's just so much emotion in that instrument and you know, you play off that, everybody plays off that—it really has to be in that role."



Roll the Bones tour, Wembley Arena, London, April 17, 1992.
Mick Hutson/Redferns/Getty Images

"I just did the stupidest interview I've ever done, in my whole life. It had nothing to do with the band. This guy went on about the drug scene in America and how musicians are all f****d up—he just went on and on and on. Finally I just said, 'Look, I know you've got some serious feelings about this, but I'm here to talk to you about the record, if you want to talk to me about it. So can we please do that?' It just went on and on. I wanted to smoke a joint, I got so upset [laughs]."

—Alex Lifeson, quoted by Steven Batten, *Northeast Ohio Scene*, 1996

1993–1997

THE ALTERNATIVE TO THE ALTERNATIVE

THE BOYS IN RUSH WALKED CONFIDENTLY through the early '90s, comfortable with their routines, their reduced workloads, their wealth, and their metropolitan life concerns and hobbies, expanded in rock 'n' roll middle age to include philanthropy. Post–*Roll the Bones*, Neil biked once again in Africa, Alex got a trip in a CF-5A fighter jet, and Geddy took his siblings and rock-of-the-family mother back to Poland to remember her tragic youth as a Holocaust survivor. Soon, both Alex and Neil got motorcycles and took riding lessons (Neil would fail twice!), planting the seed for one of them to become a famous travel journalist.

"We don't live in a very 'music business' environment," mused Lee, in conversation with *Raw*'s Darrell Shoults. "The main reason why we aren't seen around is due to time. We keep getting offered a lot of stuff, but we made a decision seven or eight years ago that time that wasn't 'Rush time' was our own time. It would be no holiday coming out of a Rush project and bouncing straight into another one with other people. I need time for family, for personal travel, all kinds of interests outside of music. I don't know if that means we're less obsessed about music than most musicians or that we just get enough of our ya-yas out in Rush. But, like most things Rush, that's just the way it is."

Test for Echo tour, June 1997. *Steve Trager photo/Frank White Photo Agency*

Counterparts tour, Madison Square Garden, New York City, March 8, 1994. *Ebet Roberts/ Redferns/Getty Images*

Author collection

Back in a music industry in which Rush was now viewed as staid seniors, trends continued to come and go, many of them not lost on a band who gladly picked and chose from them, "walking on the shores of the mainstream," as Alex was wont to say. Yet perhaps too much has been made of the influence of grunge—or of bands like the Red Hot Chili Peppers, Live, and Primus—on Rush and where they would go next. After all, it's messy. The party line was that guitar rock, produced rough 'n' raw, returned with grunge, which, depending on how deeply you were into music, appeared in 1988 or with Nirvana's breakthrough album *Nevermind*, issued September 24, 1991, three weeks after *Roll the Bones*, sonically speaking, the last Rush album of the '80s.

Yet listen to advance single "Stick It Out" from *Counterparts*, Rush's fifteenth studio album, issued thirteen months hence, and the impression quickly floods over the frustrated Rush follower of the '80s that what he or she was hearing was the band's crunchiest metallic rock since select cells from *Moving Pictures*.

"We've kinda shifted the interest back to the guitar," said Alex, repeating a promise made with every album since *Presto*. "We've been talking about moving in that direction for quite a while, but certainly with this one we made a concerted effort to do that. The keyboards are much deeper in the mix. It was to sort of capture an energy that we used to have when it was more of a concentrated three-piece. I recorded all the guitars in the studio, which was a change. I hadn't done that in a long time, and I really got off on it. It's not a particularly efficient environment, but that's the whole point why you should do it. You get out there and the guitar is vibrating, and it's tough to control the feedback. And it's really loud, and your headphones sound terrible, you can't hear anything because the guitar's so loud—it's fantastic! You just really get a great buzz from it. I was very uncomfortable with the recording for the first few days. I didn't feel that I could get the kind of performance I wanted to, only because I had so much trouble monitoring what I was playing to. But once I settled in and had certain things right—the bass drums and snare, for instance, were up really loud, and I'd gotten a very strange kind of balance, but a good working balance—then I got right into it. And it was very inspirational. The fact that you feel the guitar vibrating against your body makes you feel that you're really connected to it."

Ray Wawrzyniak collection

Counterparts promo flat, 1993. *Author collection*

Counterparts tour book. *Author collection*

Frank White collection

COUNTERPARTS

Martin Popoff

As history gets rewritten folding in upon itself, serious Rush fans get increasingly irritated pondering *Counterparts*, acknowledging its high rating and then calling it overrated. The storyline, ossifying within the band and perpetuated toward quasi-myth, is that the album is a return to clanging (rather than, ahem, chiming) guitars, and that is due to the boundless Neanderthal enthusiasm of Kevin "Caveman" Shirley, who gets a "Recorded by" credit, the actual producer, Peter Collins, often getting lost in the hype.

But there's some validity because the band does get animated when talking about Kevin, how he pressed take and gear decisions on the band, voicing his opinion that the band needed to be jogged out of this tinkling sound they'd been tinkering with like Tinker Bells.

Push and pull, positives and negatives, it's a bit to Rush's discredit that the delta force from the generally and sensibly derided *Presto* and *Roll the Bones* period would be modest and incremental. But to their credit, the result is the band's first full-blooded, "correctly" recorded album since *Signals*, that is to say, guitars that participated in something beyond post-punk, accompanied by a thump all the way down the spectrum to Neil's bass drum. Those who call this highly rated album overrated bray that the band didn't go far enough, and that the sound is still quite corporate, far from what the Caveman might have wished for, but just bold enough for these conciliatory yet conservative Canucks, as much as they could handle in one step.

So *Counterparts* is a compromise, but the end result is indeed a welcome, heavier Rush, as evidenced by groovy, drum-begun opener "Animate," a song smart of architecture, welled up with passionate melodies, a super success, maybe the album's best song. But not the first song. A black cloud we like to call "Stick It Out" was trotted out as an advance single, and it's very heavy, almost Voivodian, fully deceptive as to what would be contained in the tin, but slaked greedily by those who were looking for a beating about the chest, neck, and head area of a Rush energized by grunge (another rote plot line).

"Cut to the Chase" contains some sawing chords, a harbinger of what is to come on *Test for Echo*, and we are making note of a theme wrapped around an approximation of hard rock. The fact that "Nobody's Hero" wasn't hard rock annoyed no one, 'cos this single deserved to be a single, Peart writing a succinct and smart treatise on who really deserves to be called a hero, buttressed by sensible folk architecture—great song.

"Between Sun & Moon" gets back to supporting the rocking premise, Peart working with eccentric genius Pye Dubois of Max Webster fame on a typically obtuse lyric, one that poetically and in slanted, enchanted light supports the album's theme more darkly stated elsewhere, namely the difficulty of human relationships. But again, while Alex rocks fairly electric, Peart is recorded in full spectrum hi-fidelity and responds with some joyful bashing like his hero Keith Moon.

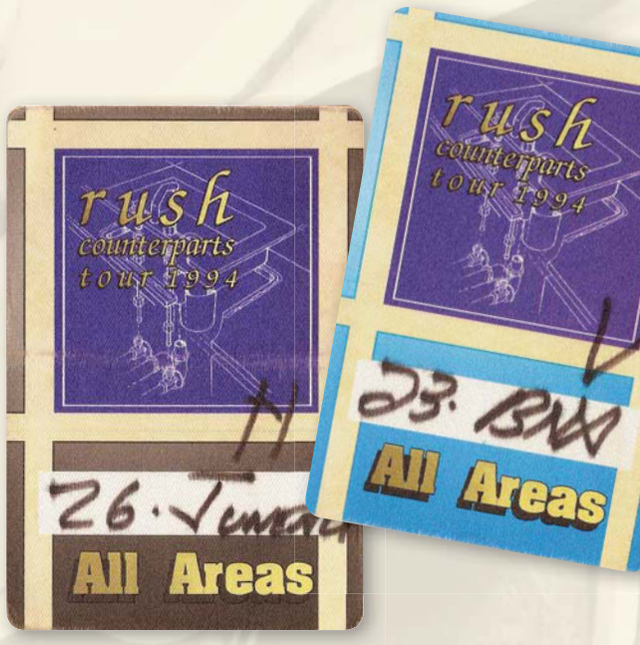
"Alien Shore" is jumpy and easily forgotten, whereas "The Speed of Love" is full-on dour and unproductive like much of the previous two albums. But come the King Crimsonian "Double Agent" the band perks up, Geddy speaking and peeking through gnarled patterns from Alex, while Neil applies a tribal hiccup of a beat. This one gives way to a completely catchy and close-to-funky instrumental called "Leave That Thing Alone," which got Rush another Grammy nomination in the rock instrumental category, as if any of this made sense. Frankly though, hooky as the track is, Alex as the texture utility man from the past few records . . . well, I welcome the return to the imposed-upon rock premise, which does in fact bound back into view come "Cold Fire," the third single from the record, which features another mature, complex relationship lyric perched upon a chimey verse that cannily serves the song's powerful, emotional chorus. It's a song of unsettling ennui, and a late-of-sequence high point from an album that has now fully earned its reputation as a receptacle of gravitas after too much white-suited quaintness from Rush.

"Everyday Glory" is crap. The end. But in summation, what has occurred is a record that is, first off, a joy to get pounded by sonically, and then full-up with all manner of event capable of getting tongues attached to the Rush cognoscenti wagging . . . some metal, some groove, the occasional inspired wall of sound, frank man-woman talk of disappointment, each firm proposal delivered with the confident, purposeful, straight-ahead stare of manly men body-rocking harder than Sting.

Counterparts tour, Madison Square Garden, New York City, March 8, 1994. *Ebet Roberts/Redferns/Getty Images*

Reiterating the embracing of real riffery one hears on "Animate," "Cold Fire," and "Cut to the Chase," Alex said, "This is, I guess, the first time in probably over ten or twelve years, since *Moving Pictures*, that it was a decided effort that the guitar would carry the weight and play the more predominant role. There's an immediacy about this record that you feel comfortable with right off first listen. Our other records take a few listens to get into the essence of them—musically, lyrically. It really takes a required effort. Whereas with this record, you put it on and there's something about the way it sounds, the way the songs are, the melodies, maybe the riffs, that draws you in immediately. *Roll the Bones* sounded so much tougher live than in the studio, which is what we really wanted to capture with these songs—to make sure it had that kind of impact. Just by the nature of the way we recorded it using an engineer whose particular style is very straightforward—I mean he just stuck the mics up and hit the record button in a very straight approach in terms of signal path from the instrument to the tape. That really helped us to capture that size and style."

Surprisingly, all of this was captured in collaboration with co-producer Peter Collins, who, in his time away from Rush, had picked up some heavy credentials with Queensryche, Gary Moore, and Alice Cooper. But really, engineer Kevin "Caveman" Shirley deserves much of the credit for forging the fire while getting a subversive, Steve Albini–like "Recorded by" credit, well earned, given the struggle Shirley had pulling the metal out of these respectable gents. An extremely confident and opinionated Shirley, horrified at the sound Rush had been getting over the last few records, was a whirlwind in the studio, configuring mics to give Neil's drums maximum bleed, making Geddy use his old Fender Jazz Bass and an ancient, ailing tube amp, and championing guitar at every turn.



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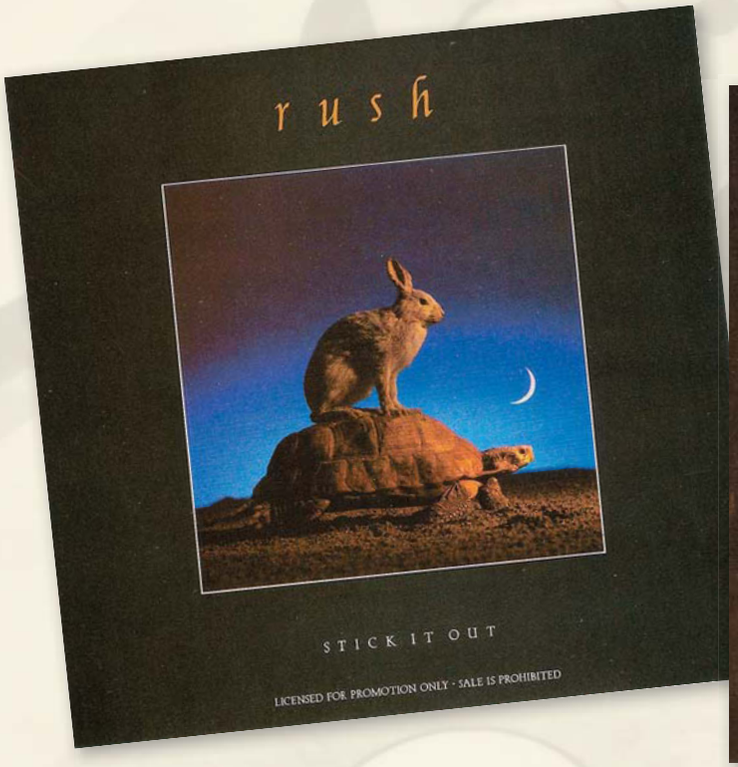
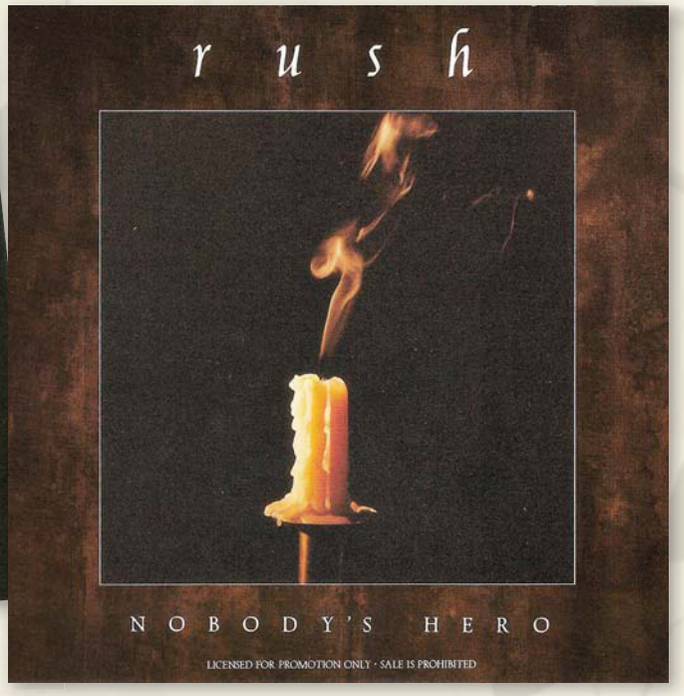


"Stick It Out" U.S. promo, 1993. *Author collection*



"Nobody's Hero" U.S. promo, 1994. *Author collection*

"Rupert was great to work with, especially on *Presto*," said Alex, charting the move from Hine to Collins, who in turn brought in Shirley when Jim "Jimbo" Barton wasn't available. "He led us in a direction that had more emphasis on just the feel, rather than on the technical aspect. His idea basically was play it and if it feels good then it is good. Don't worry if two notes are not absolutely right on the beat in the whole song. That is something that we always got caught up on—being extremely accurate, to the point of being maybe anal-retentive at times [laughs]. With *Roll the Bones* we just felt like we had gone as far as we could with Rupert. The idea really for the last while has been to use different producers on each record, but we get comfortable with a guy and we stick with him, when what we need to do is to keep trying different people because it really stimulates you. Bringing Peter back was great. He's a wonderful music producer who loves music. He's not interested in the technical end of recording—he loves the song. When we talked to him he was so enthusiastic to work with us, and we were enthusiastic to work with him again. He takes all the pressure and worry off being in the studio, and it allows you to think about what you're doing in musical terms."

"We're at that period in our lives where we're starting to question our relationships with each other," noted Geddy, explaining the title of the album, which necessarily leads to an exposé of the tension that went into the muscular record. "You start to ask, 'Why am I still hanging around with these guys?' To some extent *Counterparts* is a recognition of how the three of us have grown in different ways over the past few years. There were certainly a lot more fights during these sessions. Almost every Monday morning Alex and I would have a full-blown, in-your-face argument. It was probably a good thing.

"You could see it coming on the last tour," continued Lee. "Both Alex and I would have our moments, but our fights have always been very brotherly. When you spend more time apart you develop a stronger sense of what you like and what you don't like. Our musical vision certainly isn't as similar as it was, so we'd end up questioning each other more. When ideas come up that you're not comfortable with, it either leads to an agreement or an argument. The more confident you get as a human being, the more likely you are to stand your ground. Alex is very reactionary. He must have said 10,000 times that he didn't want any keyboards on the album, so when I brought my keyboards into the studio there was an immediate atmosphere. He kept looking at them like they were really threatening. Now, we wrote all the last album on bass, guitar, and drums and added the keys at the end to embellish. That was the only reason the keys were there—or maybe to help me express myself when I was painted into a musical corner—but Alex was making assumptions that I wanted keyboards all over the place. It was a very volatile situation."

It's hard even to find keyboards on *Counterparts*. Instead, what you do find is encompassing, low-end bass, lots of Alex up front, distortion pedal egregiously stomped, and drums with wet snare and booming bass. Indeed, as evidenced by "Animate" and funky, hook-mad instrumental "Leave That Thing Alone," Neil adds a sense of swing to his playing, with more soon to be coaxed from his heretofore disciplined frame through lessons from jazz legend Freddie Gruber, known for his theories on flow and circular motion around the kit. All told (and with a little Caveman chaos), the twee Rush of late was gone, replaced by a full-bodied, rocking Rush, even if "Nobody's Hero," one of the band's most poignant and successful ballads in years, includes plush orchestration courtesy of Michael Kamen.

"There are moments on *Counterparts* that are heavier than anything we have ever done in a long time," agrees Geddy—with qualification. "But even if we became really heavy again it wouldn't be like the way we were on *2112*. Those records were made in a certain time and place and the only way we'd be able to re-create it would be accidentally. If we did it on purpose it would sound like bullshit."

Despite *Counterparts*' goodly reputation today, the band was drained, fed up. Alex thought the record could have been better, and Geddy felt that he acquiesced to too many demands from the engineering department. Despite a crazy No. 2 showing on *Billboard*, the album hit only gold for a band that was looking old (granted, the same month, December 1993, a bunch of the back catalog was certified gold, platinum, and even multiplatinum). Yet selling *Counterparts* harder wasn't in the cards. Geddy was about to be a father for the second time and vowed to be around for those baby moments more than he had been the last time. This, in conjunction with Alex's dreams of being more creative elsewhere, maybe on a solo record, coincided to make the *Counterparts* tour a mere four months long, and only in North America.

The short tour was followed by a long break. Neil kept thinking percussion, however, working on his *Burning for Buddy* tribute project, a gathering of drummers paying homage to Buddy Rich, in concert and captured on CD. Additionally, he started taking instruction from Gruber, whom Neil credited with transforming his entire approach to the drums, beginning with the all-important switch from matched grip to traditional. Alex continued to work on his golf game, while co-opening the Orbit Room, a blues club in Toronto at which he would occasionally play as part of the Dexters. Each of the guys did some

Ticket to the 1994 Juno Awards, at which Rush received three nominations (Group of the Year, Producers of the Year, and Hard Rock Album of the Year) and were inducted into the Canadian Music Hall of Fame. *Ray Wawrzyniak collection*

During a long break after the short Counterparts tour, Alex continued to work on his golf game, while co-opening the Orbit Room, a blues club in Toronto at which he would occasionally play as part of the Dexters. *Ray Wawrzyniak collection*

Author collection

guesting on other rockers' projects (one notable credit of Alex's was his solo work on Tom Cochrane's *Ragged Ass Road*). Most significantly, Alex constructed a solo album called *Victor* (band name also Victor) featuring all manner of guest stars but most significantly, I Mother Earth's Edwin on vocals.

Rush returned to work in a manner that was bemusing and new to them. In a sense, it was a gathering to see if they even had another album in them. The dynamic had changed, as well. Geddy was rusty from lack of playing, whereas Neil was re-energized as a drummer and Alex was much more confident in all areas of record-making, having just made one wearing the captain's hat. Assembling at their usual writing haunt, Chalet Studio, Alex indicated that he'd like to produce more on the next record and be produced less by Geddy, who surprised himself by being more laid-back about his role than any time previous.

It would be natural for Rush to feel a little irrelevant (a) attempting a return after such a long break, and (b) given the continued success of youthful alternative music at the expense of all manner of oldster. Explaining the curious title of the new album, issued September 10, 1996, Geddy reflected, "*Test for Echo* [is] interesting because it accurately reflects the current situation in the group. I mean, despite the fact that Rush has existed for over twenty years, when we got together after the break to do the next album, we were not certain that anyone listened to our music anymore, that what we do means something to anyone. So this song is a kind of question: 'Is there anyone out there?' Its lyrics also allow for a certain realization as to how strange the world had become for the group Rush [laughs]."

Test for Echo tour, HP Pavilion, San Jose, California, November 20, 1996. *Tim Mosenfelder/Getty Images*

TEST FOR ECHO

Neil Daniels

Rush's sixteenth album is remembered as the last Rush album before a series of tragedies in Neil Peart's life. Released three years after *Counterparts* (where they had tried their hand at alternative rock), *Test for Echo* was recorded at New York's Bearsville Studios and Toronto's Reaction Studios between January and March 1996. The band produced the album with the London-born producer Peter Collins, who had previously worked with the band on *Power Windows* (1985) and *Hold Your Fire* (1987).

Test for Echo is not one of Rush's most well-known albums, although Peart continued to explore his fascination with science fiction and fantasy on the track "Virtuality," which explores how the Internet affects relationships between people. Academics have dissected the band's songs and written entire books on the meaning behind Rush's lyrics, and although some critics have lambasted the trio for appearing to be pretentious and self-important, others have praised them for their originality and focus. Such science fiction–tinged subjects have helped Rush become one of the most interesting bands to come out of the Great White North, as well as one of rock's greatest and, in many respects, most underrated bands. Messrs. Lee, Lifeson, and Peart came up trumps with this album, in the eyes of many prog rock fans who yearned for the band to return to their roots.

In the 1980s, the band explored far more accessible and chart-friendly musical territories as evident on 1980's *Permanent Waves* et al. But by the end of the decade and into the 1990s with *Presto* in 1989, *Roll the Bones* in 1991 and 1993's *Counterparts*, they had ventured back to a more guitar-driven sound, much to the delight of long-standing fans. The transition from synthesizers to guitars climaxed with *Test for Echo*.

It can be argued that Rush had become an AOR band in the '80s, having left their progressive rock roots of the 1970s behind, yet there are touches of prog rock on *Test for Echo*, as exampled on "Time and Motion," which has a number of time signatures, and the instrumental track "Limbo" is a nod to 1970s Rush. On the track "Limbo," Lee's voice is being used as an instrument rather than as a vocalist because he does not sing any words; this is similar to "2112 Overture." Such instrumentals and complex arrangements and time signatures are stables of progressive rock. *Test for Echo* is not an especially challenging album, with Lifeson and Lee playing in a similar guitar-bass vein as shown on the previous three albums. Peart's drumming, meanwhile, had changed technique after having received training from jazz instructor Freddie Gruber.

To promote the album, the band went on a two-year tour that was divided into two parts. However, once the tour climaxed, the band went on a five-year hiatus after Peart's daughter died in a car accident in August 1997 and his wife sadly succumbed to cancer in June 1998. As a form of therapy, Peart traveled around North America on his BMV motorbike and wrote about his experiences in a series of books.

Test for Echo was released on September 10, 1996, and peaked at No. 5 in the U.S. *Billboard* Top 200 album charts. It received generally positive reviews. "Test for Echo," "Half the World," "Driven," and "Virtuality" were released as singles.

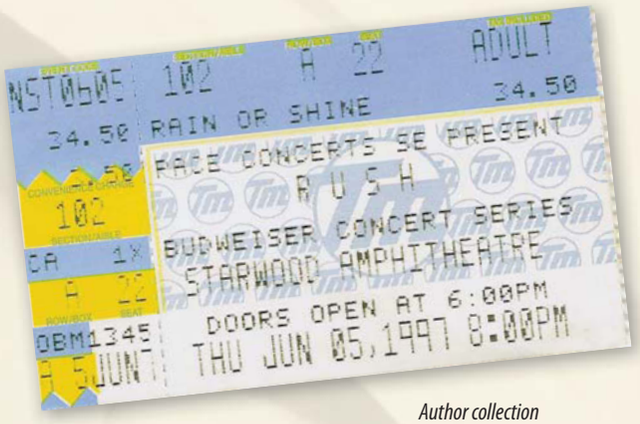
Test for Echo is by no means the perfect Rush album, but it does represent Rush's change in sound and the closing of a particular chapter of their career as they would not release a new album until 2002's *Vapor Trails*. *Test for Echo* has far more in common with their 1970s albums, such as *A Farewell to Kings*, than it does their 1980s work, such as *Power Windows*. On *Test for Echo*, it can be argued that Rush demonstrated their musical prowess better than on any album in over a decade.

Test for Echo tour, HP Pavilion, San Jose, California, November 20, 1996. *Tim Mosenfelder/Getty Images*

Author collection

In a sense, one might argue that the writing on *Test for Echo* harkened back to the Rupert Hine period, but that there were even more rough 'n' rumble guitars and percussion whacks than on *Counterparts*. "It's a slightly different approach with a different production team," said Geddy. "It's the first time we used an all American production team, with the exception of our producer, Peter Collins, who is British, but is now living in America. We were going after a little more 'in your face,' slightly American attitude to what we do. Sonically, we wanted to have a drier sound and more aggressive bottom end."

"As the record progressed we found ourselves overloading the tracks with too many guitars, too many this, too many that," added Lee. "We were getting quite dense again and we were actually worried because we were trying to do something different. That's the point where we made the decision to bring in Andy Wallace to mix it. People say you've got to be more alternative these days, but what does that mean? If anything it makes me want to sound more like us. You can tell when some band is trying to jump on the alternative bandwagon. Instead of taking that tack I want to learn from what's going on. I may have influenced them in their early, formative years but now they're in a way different space than we are and have something to teach me."



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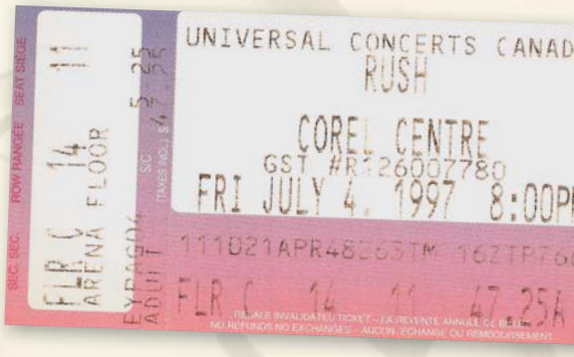

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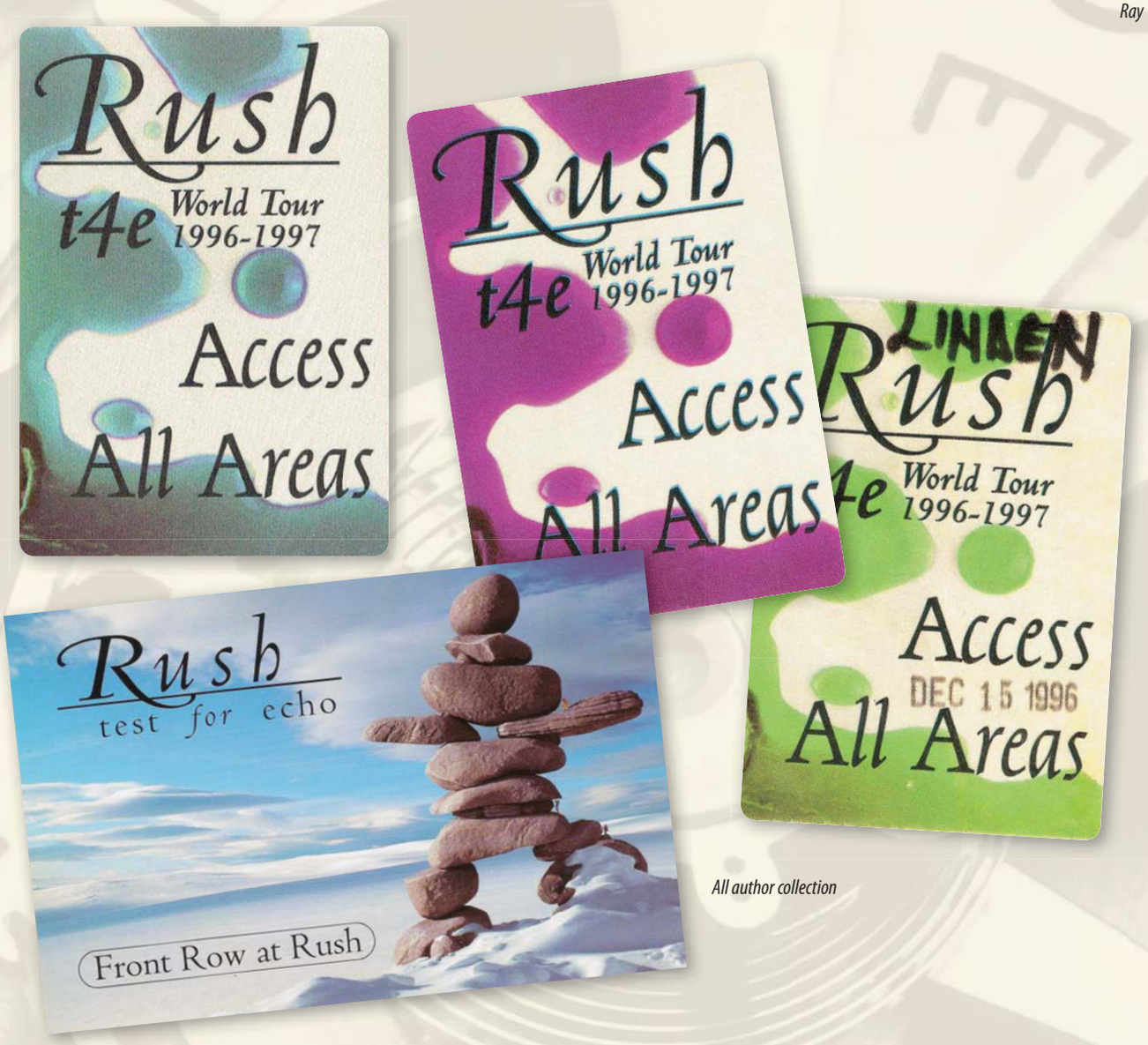

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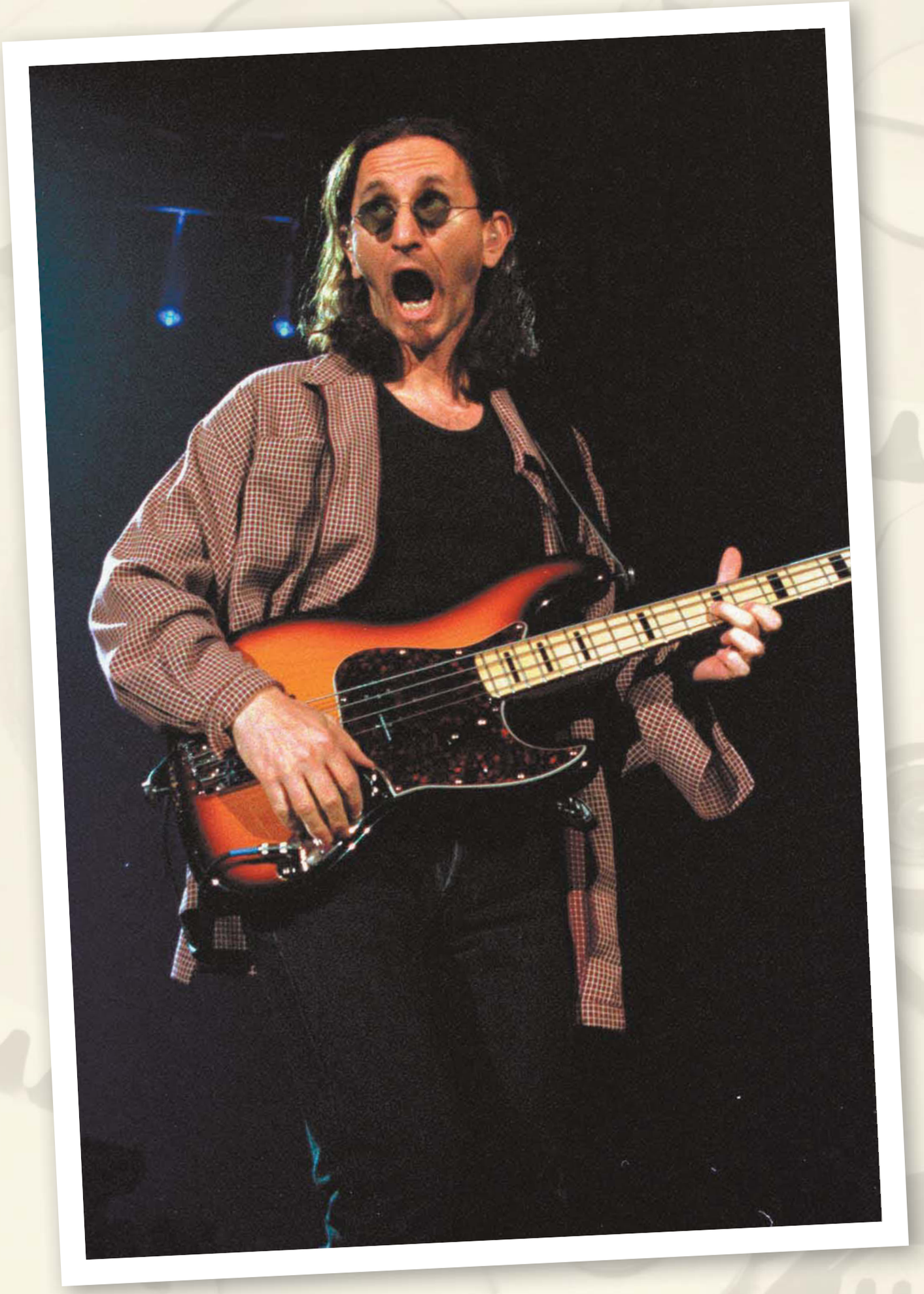
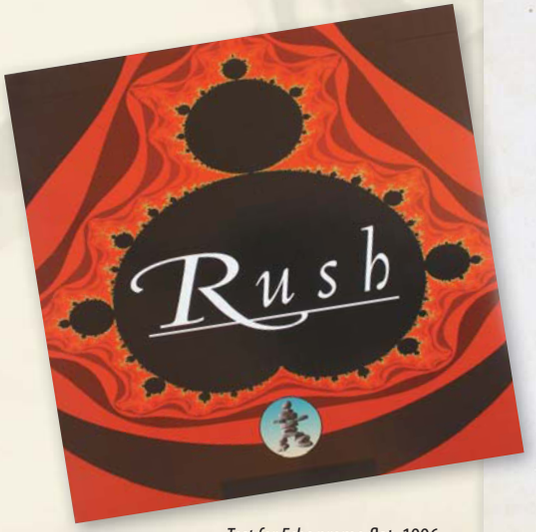
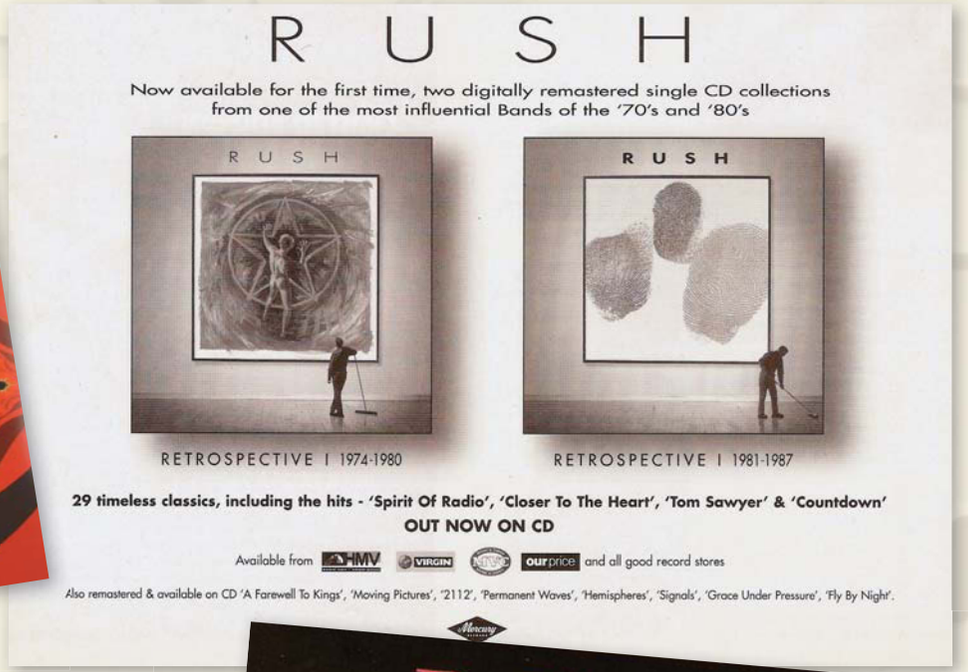


Opposite and left: Test for Echo tour, Nassau Coliseum, Uniondale, New York, December 14, 1996. *Both Patti Ouderkirk/WireImage/ Getty Images*

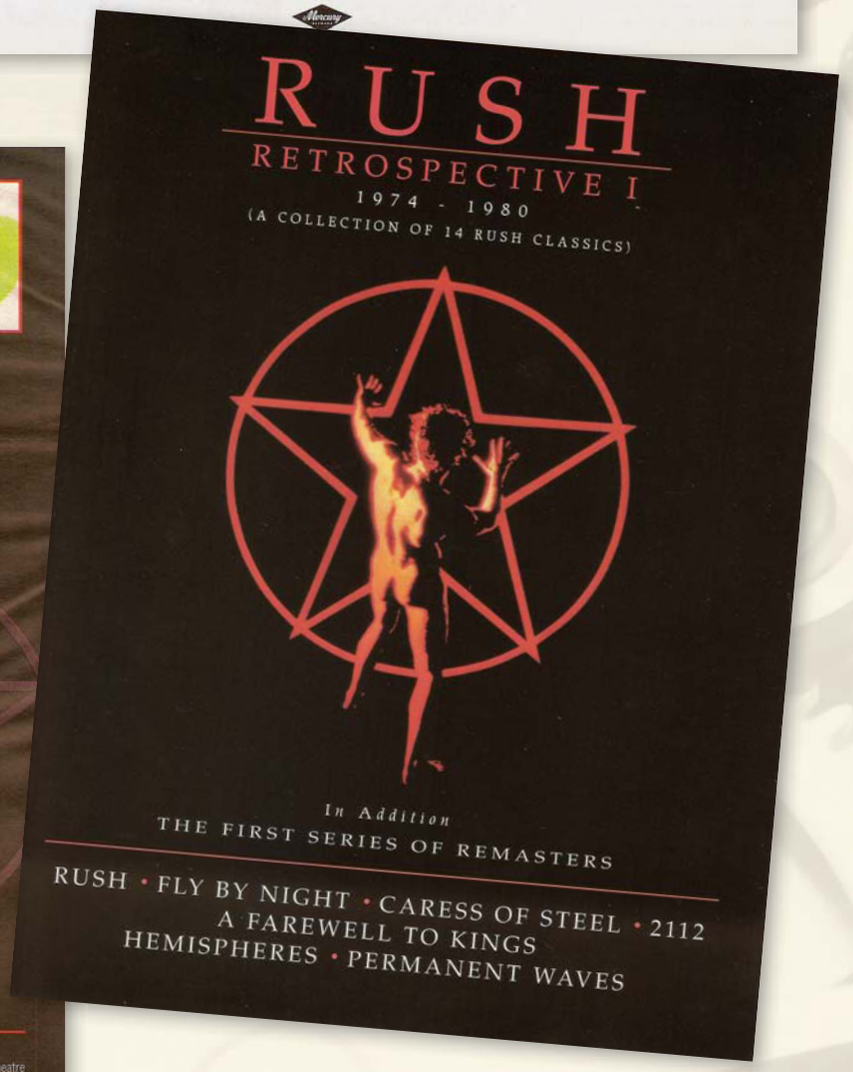
PolyGram *Retrospective I* and *II* print ad with typo, 1997. *Author collection*



Test for Echo promo flat, 1996. *Author collection*



Print ad for the remastered catalog and Canadian tour dates, 1997. *Author collection*



Retrospective I print ad, 1997. *Author collection*

On the subject of recent influences, Geddy said, "A couple of years ago I would have cited the Chili Peppers, because there was a funky and hard edge to what they were doing. When Soundgarden first came on the scene I liked that kind of unbridled fury that was in their music. And I have a great appreciation for the economical songwriting of the Smashing Pumpkins. They inspire you to have another go at it from a different point of view. That's why going into each project is so exciting for us. We don't know what's going to come out the other end."

Fans need not have feared that Rush would go "alternative," even if there was a palpable noisy and combative vibe to tracks like "Driven," "Time and Motion," "Dog Years," and "Virtuality," the latter being the band's amusing commentary on this new Internet thing, Rush always ready to play the role of early adopter.

A couple of features concerning the band's tour for the album would be the decision to play the song/side "2112" in its entirety, made possible in part by the bigger decision to conduct the tour as "An Evening with," meaning a longer show with an intermission and no support act. On July 4, 1997, Geddy, Alex, and Neil closed out the brief *Test for Echo* tour in Canada's capital city of Ottawa, Ontario, the culmination of a typically short central Canadian leg. It would be the band's last live appearance for five unimaginably heartbreaking years.

One of the band's most significant milestones in the final years of the 20th century was the release of the *Different Stages* live set on November 10, 1998.

Over the years, members of Rush have performed at the White Ribbon benefit concert organized by Crash Karma drummer Jeff Burrows to help end violence against women. *Ray Wawrzyniak collection*

Released in May and June 1997, *Retrospectives I* and *II* provided notable highlights of the band's recorded output through 1987.

"Every night the show went on without a hitch. But, we did have our guests come up on stage and do 'dryer duty.' We never knew who was going to show up to put coins in the machines. One night our chef appeared and he was wearing his apron and that was all. Other nights we had people I didn't even know show up in French maid costumes. One night a stripper wearing chaps came out onstage with the coins and on other nights, crewmembers in crash helmets came scooting across the stage on their electric scooters."

—Geddy Lee, quoted by Christopher Buttner, *Bass Guitar*, 2003

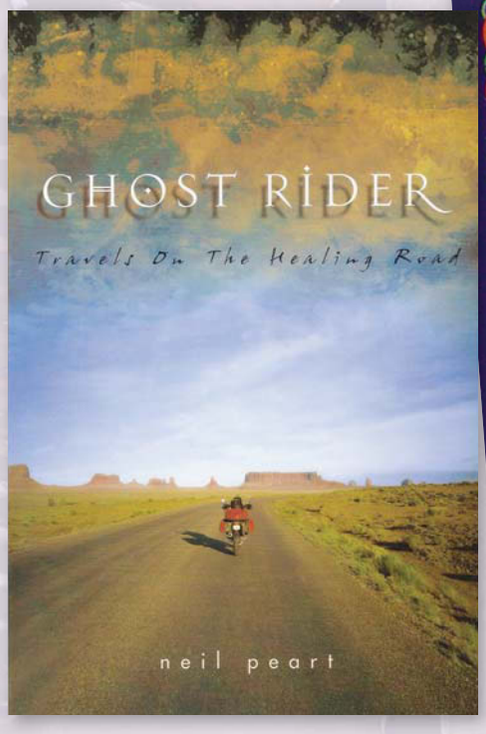
2000–2007
OUTSIDERS NO MORE

Opposite: Vapor Trails tour, MGM Grand Garden Arena, Las Vegas, Nevada, September 21, 2002. *Ethan Miller/Getty Images*

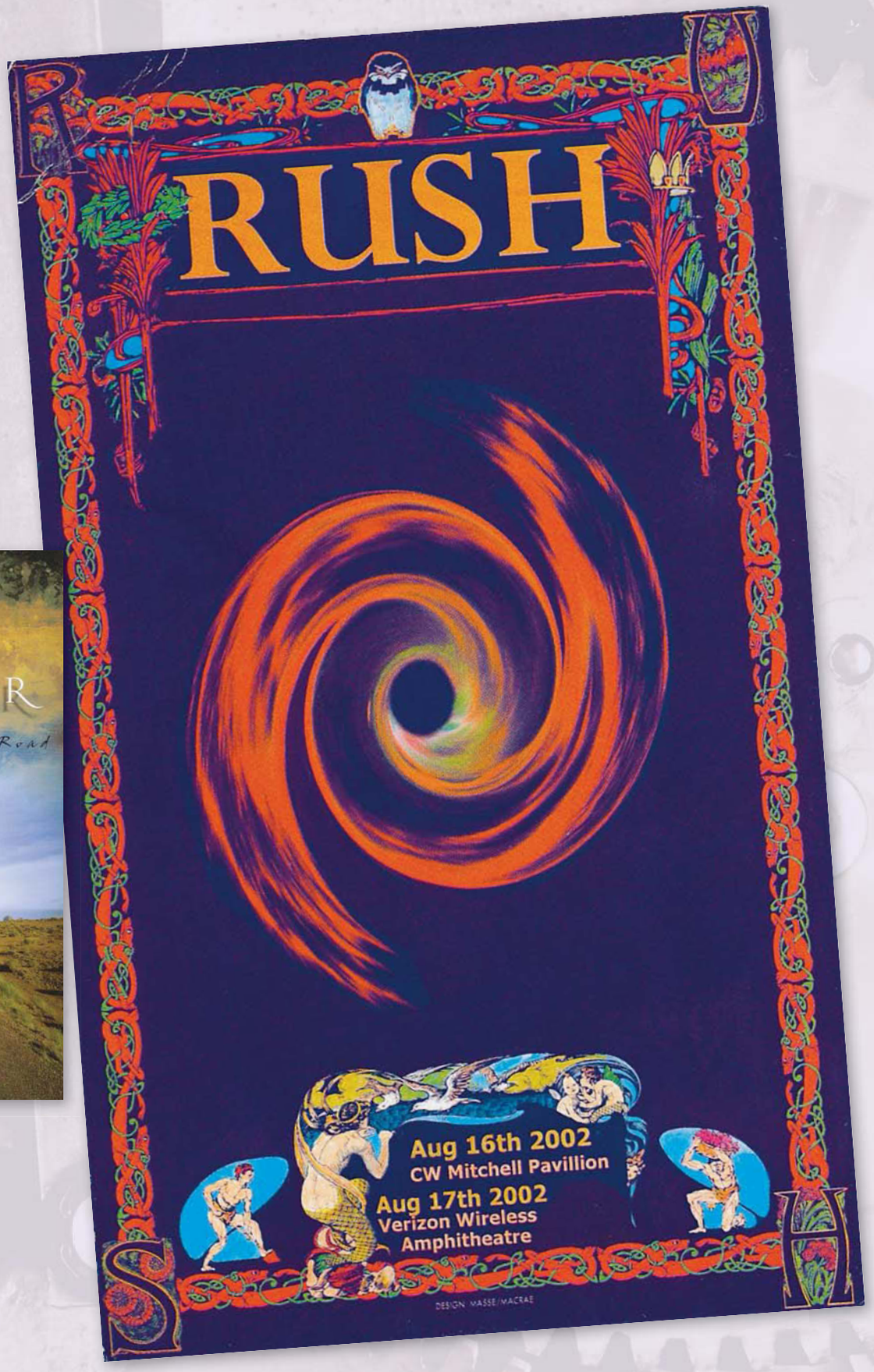
HAVING CLOSED OUT THE *TEST FOR ECHO* TOUR with no uncommon sense of triumph attached to either the live work or the record—both possessed a drifted sense of Rush just going to work—the band members scattered back to their rich personal lives. The early days of 1997 found the band in receipt of the prestigious Order of Canada, the first time the award had ever been bestowed upon an entire rock group, partly for being Rush, partly for the band's quiet devotion to charitable causes, having raised over a million dollars for the United Way and food banks over the years, along with participation in myriad other charitable projects and recordings.

On August 10, 1997, the relative calm of Rush in repose was shattered by the death of Neil's daughter and only child, Selena, killed in a car accident along the straight and generally peaceful Highway 401 on her way back to university. No other vehicles were involved. Selena was only nineteen, with a world of opportunity ahead. Neil's wife, Jackie, was inconsolable and, as Neil has expressed, not all that upset at her own arriving cancer diagnosis. On June 20 the following year, Jackie died, as Neil put it, "of a broken heart," after

Fender
JAZZ BASS



The loss of his daughter, Selena, and wife, Jackie, in less than twelve months in 1997 and 1998 led Neil on an epic motorcycle journey that he documented in his bestselling memoir, *Ghost Rider: Travels on the Healing Road*, issued July 5, 2002.



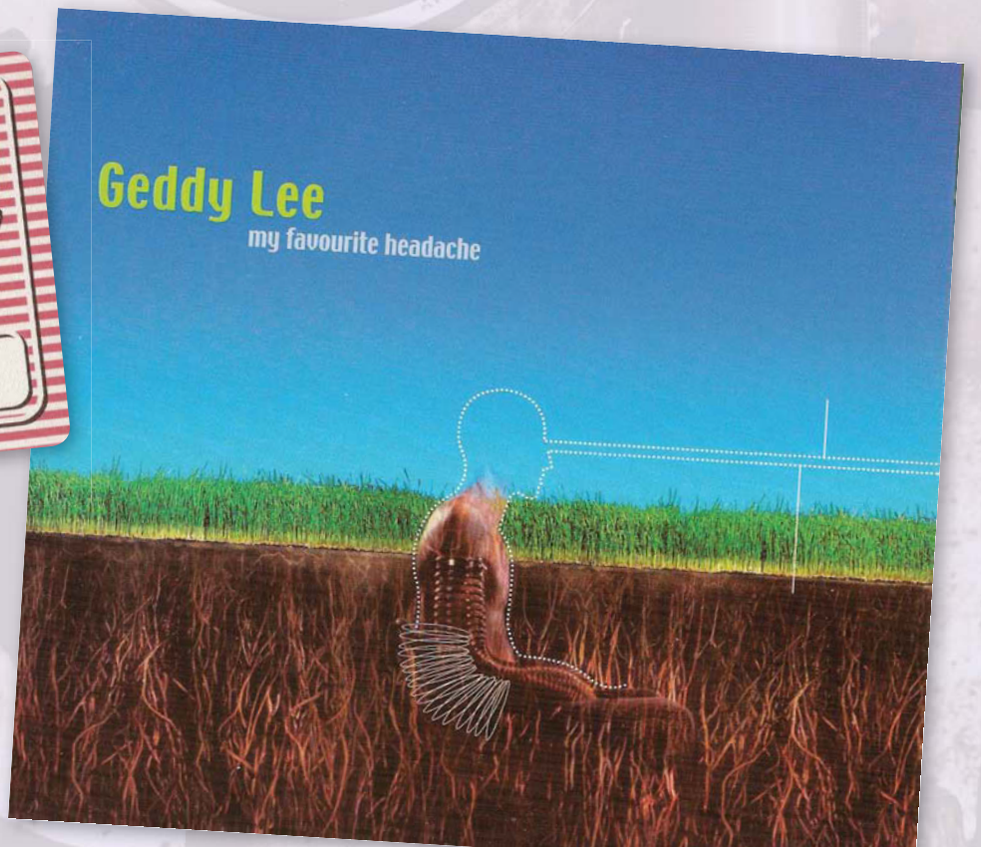
Vapor Trails tour, The Woodlands and San Antonio, Texas.

months of shock and depression that saw the embattled couple drift from London to the Bahamas to Toronto, looking for purpose without Selena.

Alex, Geddy, Ray, and the rest of the close-knit office and crew felt the Pearts' pain nearly as acutely, there being no doubt or debate that Rush was over, a nonissue. Now utterly alone, Neil hit the road on an epic motorcycle journey that would be documented in his bestselling memoir, *Ghost Rider: Travels on the Healing Road*, issued July 5, 2002. With nothing scheduled in his personal or professional life, Peart headed west and north through British Columbia, in the process covering much of North America and notching 33,000 miles of observant travel and travel writing as he moved through Mexico and as far south as Belize. All worried about Neil's state of mind. While Neil roared down the road alone, Rush and their extended family eagerly anticipated the next in-joke-filled postcard, scrutinizing every word for clues that he was OK. Ray had a dialog with Neil over his dwindling finances, trying to drive home the point about how expensive this introspective journey with no end was turning out to be.

Although no proposals were put through from Ray to the guys that could be construed as heavy lifting, Rush's presence in pop culture could not be denied. "Tom Sawyer" showed up on two soundtrack albums, one for the film *Whatever* and one for Adam Sandler's high-profile comedy *The Waterboy*. A third film, *Small Soldiers*, used the song in DJ Z-Trip remix form, while Nissan also tapped the track for a car ad. "Yes, this was approved by both the band and Anthem," explained a label press release. "We really don't have a problem with it as it was tastefully done. In this day and age where there's no real rock radio left, and video TV only plays pop music, we are trying other directions to get the music out there. I know the whole 'corporate sell-out' lines. I just don't think they're applicable any longer." May and June 1997 saw the first couple of new Rush hits packs, under the *Retrospective* banner, and in May 1999, the band was awarded a star on Canada's Walk of Fame, along with the attendant glitz and press. Geddy and Alex were establishing a pattern as the necessarily compromised "face of Rush" for what would be years to come.

Author collection



Geddy Lee's (so far) only solo effort was released in November 2000 and featured Rush collaborator Ben Mink, as well as Soundgarden and Pearl Jam drummer Matt Cameron.

Opposite: Vapor Trails tour, Tweeter Center, Mansfield, Massachusetts, July 12, 2002. *Brooke Ismach/WireImage/Getty Images*

Also in 1999, Geddy guested on albums by Euphoria and I Mother Earth and worked with Alex on a version of the Canadian national anthem for *South Park: Bigger, Longer & Uncut*. In addition, Alex got a little producing in, with 3 Doors Down and an MTV contest-winning band called Lifer. The most significant milestones during this period, however, were the releases of a Rush live album called *Different Stages* (November 10, 1998) and a first (and so far only) solo album from Geddy, called *My Favourite Headache*, issued at the end of 2000.

"We have a long history of covering different periods of this band's development with a live record," said Alex, concerning *Different Stages*, in an interview with *Big O*, "and that was the intention with this particular package. But what happened was, once we started recording these last two tours, for *Test for Echo* primarily and *Counterparts* as well, we were really quite pleased with the results we got sound-wise and in terms of the performance. We were playing with a confidence and maturity that we'd never felt or heard in our playing before. So rather than just cover the last four records, we went back and had a representation of '2112' on there, and 'Natural Science' and a repeat of songs like 'Tom Sawyer' and 'Closer to the Heart.'"

Asked about the bonus CD, featuring a lost show from 1978, Alex explained, "We were in the studio . . . the office was making some changes and they were taking their tape storage area to another room and we came across these old tapes we'd forgotten about. We'd recorded these in February 1978 and it was for a radio program. We decided not to release the tape because Geddy had had problems with his voice that night; at least that's the way we remembered it. So we decided not to let them go, and the tapes were put in storage. Four years ago we came across them, decided to give them a listen . . . we talked

Vapor Trails promo flat, 2002. *Author collection*

VAPOR TRAILS

Daniel Bukszpan

In the late 1980s and 1990s, Rush released a series of bafflingly flaccid albums, on which Geddy Lee mothballed his Rickenbacker in favor of banks of synthesizers, obscuring Alex Lifeson's guitar in the process. A decent tune or two would emerge every so often during this period, and the faithful did their best to stay in the band's corner. But when a rap section appeared in 1991's *Roll the Bones*, many of them finally said it: RUSH IS DEAD TO ME.

While feelings of betrayal ran deep, fans still held out hope that 13/8 time signatures would reappear on the horizon, that epic compositions marked with Roman numerals would be plentiful. This was not to be, but 2002's *Vapor Trails* came pretty close to redeeming more than a decade's worth of synth-pop missteps.

That the album exists at all is a miracle. In 1997, drummer Neil Peart's nineteen-year-old daughter, Selena, was killed in a car accident, a tragedy that was compounded ten months later when his wife, Jackie, died of cancer. It was an incomprehensible turn of events, and it relegated everything Rush to indefinite back-burner status, where it could well have stayed. But in January 2001, the three friends reconvened and started the difficult process of making music again.

Not everyone was happy with it. Some fans groused that the album had been a badly mastered victim of the "loudness war," and there wasn't even a lead guitar break. But in the raw lava of guitars, bass, drums, and distortion, Peart's grief comes through loud and clear, and reduces most of the complaints to nitpicking.

The album opens with the tricky drum pattern and teeth-gnashing guitar riff of "One Little Victory," followed by "Ceiling Unlimited," an angst-ridden cry of roaring guitars that's the thickest the band has ever sounded. "Ghost Rider," the only song on the album that's clearly about Peart's tragedies, does as good a job of conveying grief as you can ask for without being just a list of sad events more suited to a George Jones song. The album shifts into sunnier territory with the huge bass chords of "Peaceable Kingdom," and it stays upbeat during "The Stars Look Down" and "How It Is." But then the title track comes along and napalms the sunny good vibes with utter despair.

The next two songs make up the album's peak. "Secret Touch" is a half-mad frenzy of dark, disjointed funk and Voivod-style dissonance. As a bonus, it was the second single off the album, which meant that Sheryl Crow and Britney Spears had to share the airwaves with it. It's followed by "Earthshine," another in a long line of Rush songs whose odd meter sounds natural. In the measures before the chorus, Geddy Lee sings "doo doo doo" in a winding melody that communicates deep yearning, more than lyrics ever could. It's a good example of the band at their most transcendent.

"Secret Touch" and "Earthshine" are tough acts to follow, and the next few songs suffer for it. "Sweet Miracle," "Nocturne," and "Freeze" are all perfectly serviceable tunes, but by this point the album has simply said what it has to say. Fortunately, "Out of the Cradle" provides a positive note to go out on, and it reverses the dragging feeling of the last couple of songs.

Despite the slight decline at the end of the album, *Vapor Trails* still works best taken as a whole. It can be a very dense listen at first, and to this day there are very loyal fans who still see it as a misstep in the Rush catalog. But it's worth sticking with it. For those who had any sort of emotional reaction to what took place in Peart's life, it's a rewarding journey that's very much worth taking.

even then about the prospects of doing a live recording even though it was still a few records away. We took the tapes to the studio for a listen and thought that there was really something there. I don't think that we would ever have released the Hammersmith tapes as a single live release 'cos they don't really relate to anything and it was not really the best of nights, but it is a representation of one night twenty years ago and in the whole scheme of this package we thought it would be a really interesting contrast. I think if you play them back to back, you get a sense of where the band was back then, how young and spirited we were, the level of energy, and then when you get into the more current stuff, you get the . . . to me, the maturity and confidence and majesty in the arrangements. And also we made it clear to the record companies that in terms of pricing, the third CD would basically be a free bonus CD."

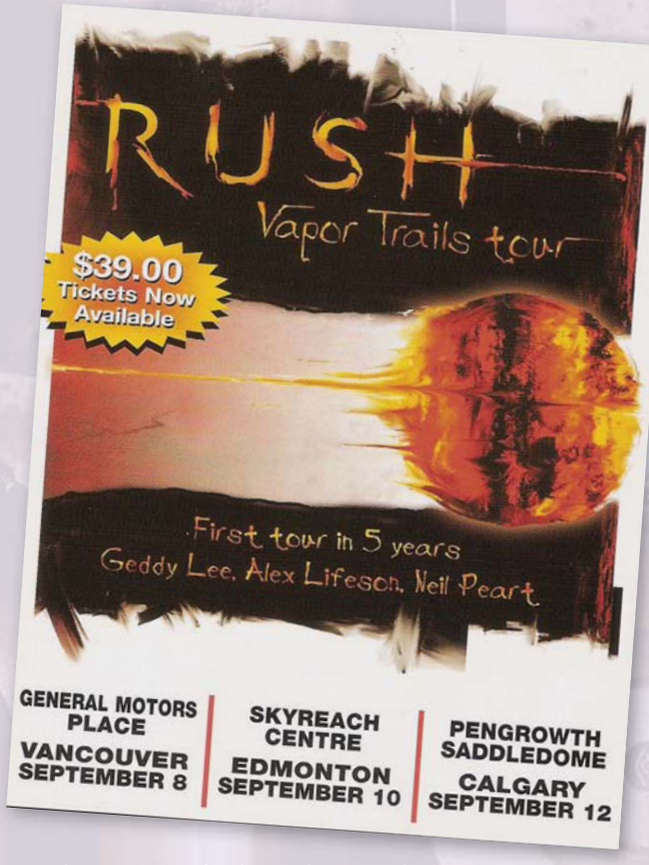
As the new millennium arrived, to everybody's quiet delight, Geddy and Alex were receiving signals from Neil that he might want to drum again—or at least see if there was a job for him.

"After the initial shock wore off, none of us felt compelled to continue in music or do anything creative," said Alex, in conversation with *Now*'s Michael Hollett. "It just killed that whole spark. But slowly, we started to recover. Geddy and I found that music was still a very, very important part of our lives and we wanted to continue. Then it was a matter of Neil catching up. But at the time, I don't think either one of us thought Neil was ever going to be interested in coming back."

"I can't really say that it felt like waiting after a time," added Geddy. "I resigned myself to the fact that this could have been the end. It was a sad way to end, but Alex and I thought, let's just be to him what he needs. He needs us to be his friends, and if he gets to the point where he feels good about making music again, then that's a huge win, because that means he's feeling good, period."

When a new Rush album called *Vapor Trails* emerged on May 14, 2002, fans were shocked to hear the gritty textures and loose-yet-heavy playing all over the album, not to mention the near-complete lack of anything one could call a guitar solo. There was a spontaneity that hadn't been there before, and Neil's lyrics were some of the darkest, most introspective, and personal among his usually grand and outward-thinking oeuvre. Most welcome of all, however, was the opening salvo from Neil on first track "One Little Victory," where Peart punks out with determination more than joy, announcing that he was back in the role manager Ray Danniels said he could not give up: that of "world's greatest drummer."

The record's organic quality is the result of fourteen months of jams, songs taking shape and captured on tape, with many of those moments used as the bed tracks for the songs that made the album. Reflected Alex on this least rule-abiding of Rush albums, "The expectations were different. It wasn't the same band anymore, and we weren't the same people—not just because of what happened to Neil. We had all grown and matured a lot.

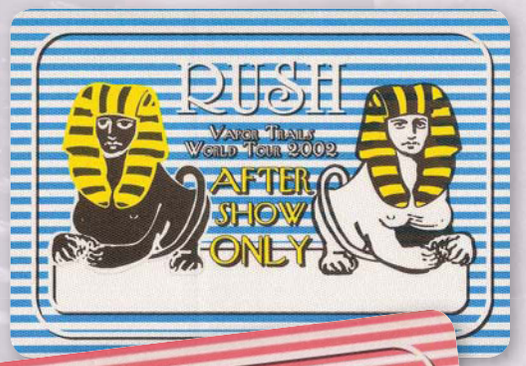


Ad announcing Canadian dates on the *Vapor Trails* tour, 2002. *Author collection*

When you get to your mid-forties, you definitely go through a change, and I think that's reflected in the sound. It's definitely one of our best records. It has a passion and spirit that I think are lacking in some of our previous work. We get a little surgical and anal in the studio; we've been trying over the last few records to loosen up a little."

Reviews of the album ranged from effusive to undecided and shocked, yet rarely negative. "The blaze of metal-edged guitar licks Alex Lifeson unleashes during this disc's intro," wrote *Billboard*'s Christa L. Titus, "were surely fueled by pent-up anticipation for Rush to start jamming again. In fact, that same blast of energy welding this CD of new material together resonates long after the last crash of drummer Neil Peart's cymbals. After a six-year hiatus, Rush seems more concerned with preserving its musical empathy than exploring a vastly new direction: *Vapor Trails* echoes the passion of 1993's *Counterparts*, albeit with a more back-to-basics sensibility (there are no keyboards and overdubs are kept to a minimum). Peart's lyrics are both confessional and celebrational, and few can match his still-precise drumming technique. Lifeson's playing is freer and bolder; Geddy Lee handles his bass/vocal chores with equal aplomb. The more time one spends with *Vapor Trails* the richer and more nuanced it becomes. Consider this an absolute triumph."

Indeed it seemed that after all that had happened, a corner had been turned. Snide derision was gone like a, well, vapor trail, with more weight and seriousness ascribed to the new album and everything Rush did and said. Excited as fans were at the first show



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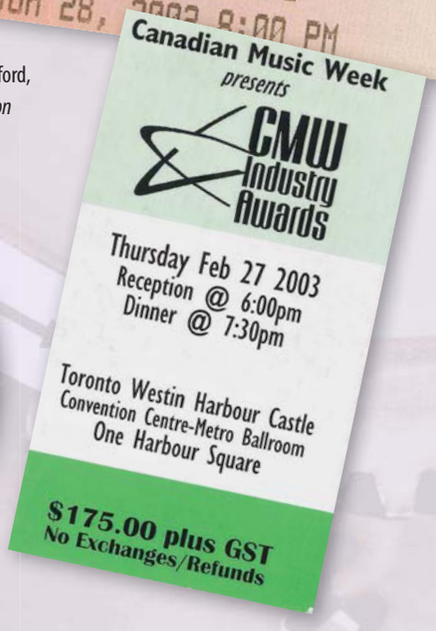
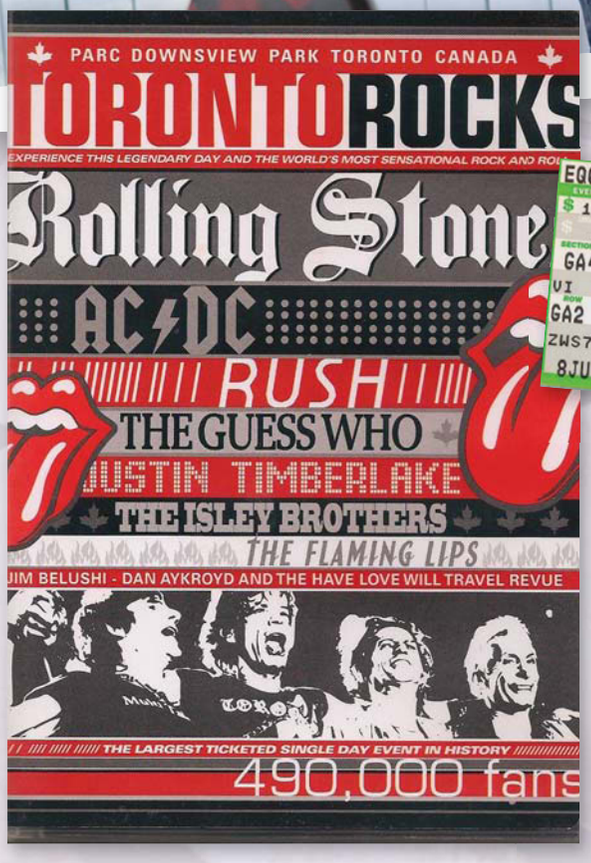
Opening night, *Vapor Trails* tour, Hartford, Connecticut. *Ray Wawrzyniak collection*

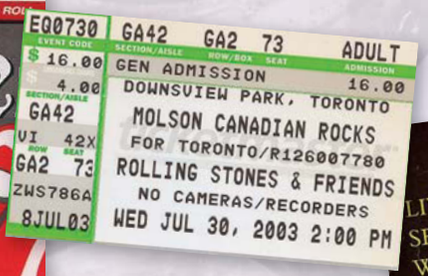
Frank White collection



Ray Wawrzyniak collection

Molson Canadian Rocks for Toronto, Downsview Park, July 30, 2003. *KMazur/WireImage/Getty Images*





Ray Wawrzyniak collection

The band played a brief yet blazing set for an estimated four hundred thousand at Toronto Rocks. The show—staged as a sort of pick-me-up after the SARS health scare—was not only in Rush's hometown but in their old neighborhood. *Ray Wawrzyniak collection*

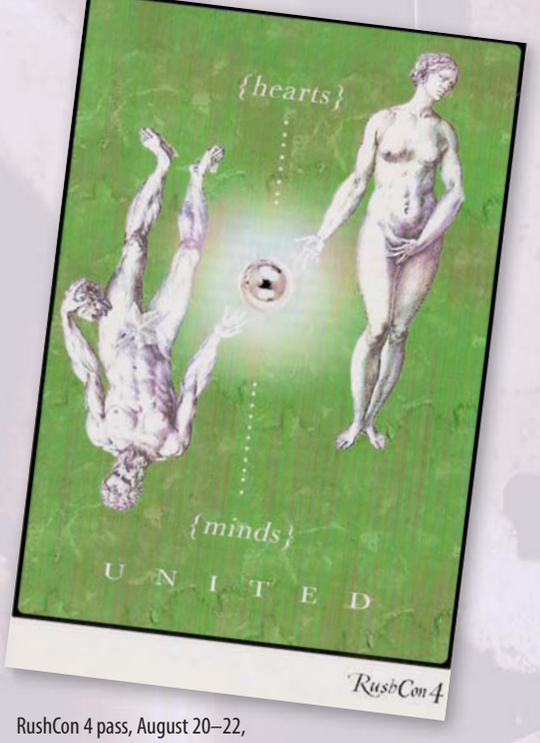
R30 tour, Sound Advice Amphitheater, West Palm Beach, Florida, July 29, 2004. *Ralph Notaro/Getty Images*

Ray Wawrzyniak collection

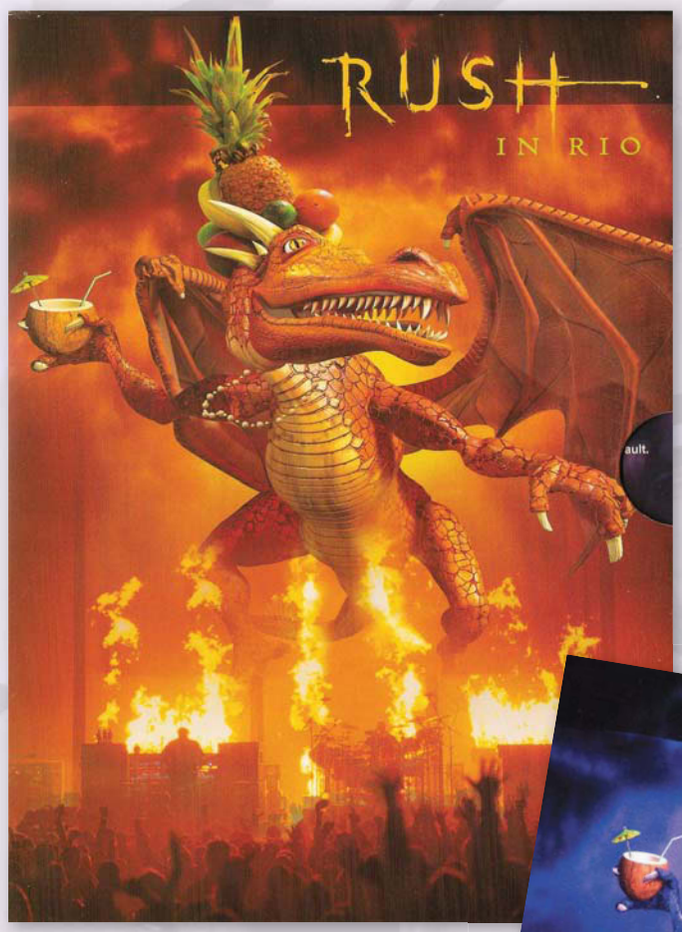
of the *Vapor Trails* tour, in Hartford, Connecticut, on June 28, 2002, the response was nothing compared with the hysteria that awaited the band upon their first trip ever to South America, captured on the bombastic love-in that was the *Rush in Rio* live set, issued October 21 the following year.

The mania continued through the band's brief yet blazing set (eight selections, including an instrumental "Paint It Black") at the Toronto Rocks mega-gathering, July 30, 2003, at which Rush played to the biggest throng of their career, an estimated four hundred thousand, singularly rare for this band that spent most of their career turning down festival dates. Rush and AC/DC were the most fondly talked about over the ensuing days, both said to have upstaged the headlining Rolling Stones, all the more poignant given that the show (staged as a sort of pick-me-up after the SARS health scare) was not only in Rush's hometown but in their old neighborhood.

With a distinct emphasis on Rush as a career-celebrating live act, the globe-traversing party would continue through the early '00s as the band commemorated their thirtieth anniversary with the *R30* DVD and CD package, capturing a typically long and involved



RushCon 4 pass, August 20–22, 2004. *Author collection*



The bombastic love-in preserving for all posterity the band's first trip to South America was recorded on November 23, 2002, and released on CD and DVD in late 2003. *Author collection*

On the covers EP *Feedback*, the band paid homage to rock classics that fired their imaginations as teenagers, including numbers by the Who, the Yardbirds, Buffalo Springfield, Cream, and Blue Cheer.

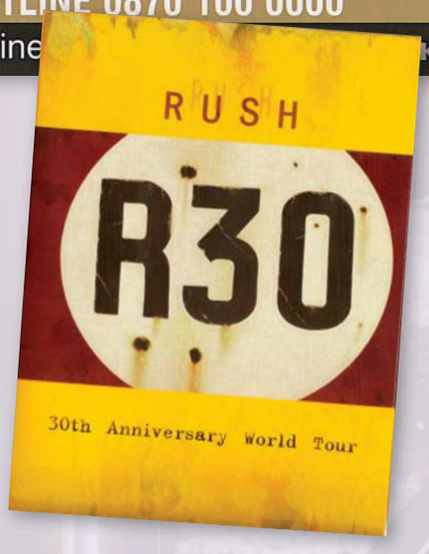
Roland

Ray Wawrzyniak collection

Trade ads for band's thirtieth anniversary, 2004. *Author collection*

show in Frankfurt, Germany. There was also a curious covers EP called *Feedback*, on which the band paid homage to ancient rock classics that fired their imaginations as teenagers, the band's raucous take on "Summertime Blues" becoming a bit of an amusement at classic rock radio.

The effect of all of this was to position Rush as a band making a sort of victory lap. Most inspiringly, it was a victory for Neil, who was firing the engine room like never before, gorgeous, gleaming new drum kits at every turn threatening to take the attention away from the resolute machine pounding them. But yes, the show, impossibly, got increasingly more epic and more technical from a visual standpoint, and a subtle shift had been made, from band on the studio record/tour treadmill, to one worthy of so much packaging, repackaging, pomp, eventful tour splash, and, most notably, warm welcomes and wishes from the rock cognoscenti into the pantheon of the rock 'n' roll greats.



The band commemorated their thirtieth anniversary with the *R30* DVD and CD package, capturing a typically long and involved show in Frankfurt, Germany. *Author collection*

Opposite: R30 tour, Wembley Arena, London, September 8, 2004. *C Brandon/Redferns/Getty Images*

Ray Wawrzyniak collection

After all the hoopla, however, and four years and counting since the gritty *Vapor Trails*, both band and fans were sensing that it might be time for some new material. The new Rush could only approach such an idea sideways, the guys casually feeling each other out to see if there was a record in them, a technique that began with *Test for Echo* and continued, albeit for more depressing reasons, with *Vapor Trails*.

"The sessions were fantastic," noted Alex, on getting down to business with co-producer Nick Raskulinecz, best known for his work with Foo Fighters, but also a host of alternative metal acts including Velvet Revolver, Stone Sour, and Fireball Ministry. "We had a riot; he was very motivating and very inspiring. . . . Nick saw us play when he was eleven years old. It was the first concert he had gotten to; his mom took him. His mother was a big fan, and she still is, which is really fantastic, especially for Nick, as it's kind of gone full circle. But he is a very gregarious, outgoing guy, and he knew a lot about the band. But one of the interesting things he said was, 'You guys forget who you are sometimes. And with this record, you need to remember who you are. Because you have a lot of good things about your history that you overlook or ignore.' And I think he's right. I think left to our own devices, we tend to leave everything behind and move forward, almost to the point where

Frank White collection

All author collection

Ray Wawrzyniak collection

SNAKES & ARROWS

Andrew Earles

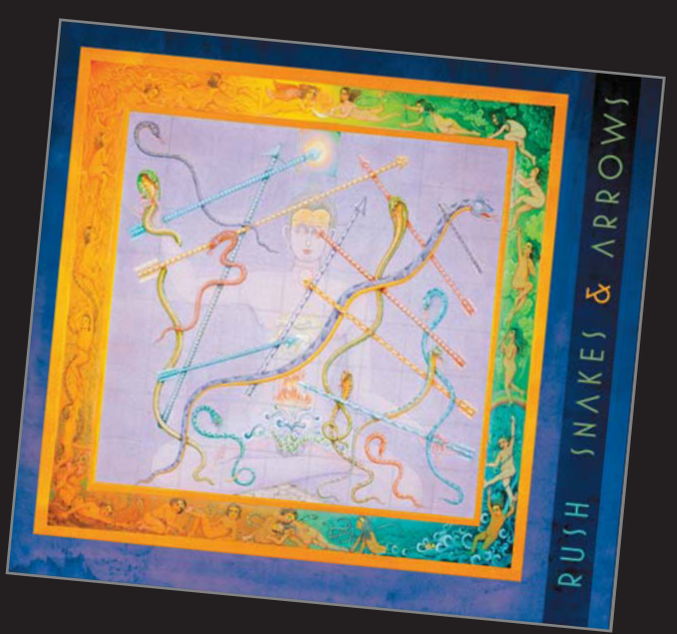
Snakes & Arrows put to rest the fears that had gelled among Rush fans since the release of 2002's almost-impenetrable, experimentally driven *Vapor Trails*. The songs are back, as are the guitar solos (*Vapor Trails* was conspicuously free of Lifeson's soloing for most of its duration), along with a sense of purpose and a mastery of the rock therapy its predecessor alternately succeeded and failed at providing its creators. Instrumentals are back in a big way, too, much to the unwarranted chagrin of some critics and longtime fans.

In terms of tracks without Geddy's somewhat modernized vocal range, *Snakes & Arrows* packs a whopping three: two fully formed jams ("The Main Monkey Business" and "Malignant Narcissism"—the latter's title refers to a North Korean "Dr. Kim"–style character in *Team America*) and one plaintive acoustic venture courtesy of Lifeson, titled "Hope." In a nod to their album-arranging habits throughout the '70s, all three instrumental tracks appear during the second half of the album. And whereas previous post-1990 output could, for better or worse, sound like Rush awkwardly cozying up to grunge, alternative hard rock, and other sonic places associated with younger bands, as the '90s came to a close, *Snakes & Arrows* found the trio using such influences to a more unique, if not subtle, degree. That said, "The Main Monkey Business" is distinctly informed by the post-metal movement omnipresent on the heavy music/metal landscape since Y2K, and sounds more like Russian Circles or even Tool (instrumentally, of course) than it does a veteran prog-rock band on the other side of their 30th anniversary.

The instrumental tracks' rear-loaded placement not only recalls the Rush of old, but it wisely lets the first half of the album showcase its own strengths: several guitar-dominated songs that are undoubtedly the best and most confident rock/hard rock Peart, Lee, and Lifeson had written since 1990's return-to-the-rock refresher course, *Presto*. Opening track "Far Cry" is especially memorable and the vehicle by which a big hook Trojan-horses its way into the listener's head for the rest of the day. Same goes for the standouts that follow. "The Bravest Face," "Working Them Angels," and "Faithless" display overt rejuvenation as much as they do forward momentum and artistic achievement, placing Rush in a category of its own—the aesthetic antithesis of their former contemporaries, namely in a live setting.

Like *Clockwork Angels* in 2012, *Snakes & Arrows* provides the band a wealth of topical, creative dignity from which to draw for their epic-length concert sets, unlike most all of Peart, Lee, and Lifeson's hard rock and progressive rock colleagues from the 1970s who are still active or have reformed over the last decade and rely on heyday content as a safety net when weak newer material fails to do little more than embarrass both the musicians and the loyal fans who perpetually hope for something better.

While the sizeable followings of some other older bands might come off as a weird wrinkle in cultural logic, Rush's huge, beyond-cult fan base makes total sense when the inspired *Snakes & Arrows* is taken into consideration. It's debatable which act (third? fourth?) Rush is now navigating with pride, energy, success, and genuine invention, but there's no question as to which album provided its genesis.



we lose touch with where we came from. And I think he really wanted us to keep that in mind, what the strengths of the band have been over the years."

The end result was *Snakes & Arrows*, issued May 1, 2007, a more completely written record than its predecessor, and a record with an added curious distinction: the massaging of acoustic guitar into what are mostly pounding rock songs.

"Before we actually started writing, I mentioned to Geddy that I thought it would be refreshing to take an acoustic approach to writing," noted Lifeson. "He thought that was a great idea. In fact, we both started out on acoustic, and it lasted for about five minutes, and then he put the acoustic down and he picked up the bass, the electric bass. We wrote like that in the old days, but he hasn't played guitar in decades. The best way is how it ended up, me being on acoustic and him being on bass. And the whole writing process was on acoustic; I didn't play electric once while writing. And of course, the album has a lot of acoustic on it, either in a primary or secondary role. I love using acoustic as support. I think it adds a richness to the heaviness, of this record in particular. And certainly guys like [Pete] Townshend and David Gilmour were masters at using acoustic to make a big statement."

"It's much bolder, richer sounding, it's heavier, it's stronger, less personal," added Alex, asked to contrast the record with its predecessor. "To me, I don't find very much in

Snakes & Arrows tour, Tweeter Center, Mansfield, Massachusetts, June 27, 2007. *AP Photo/Robert E. Klein*

Snakes & Arrows tour book, 2007. *Author collection*

Snakes & Arrows tour, Camden, New Jersey. *Artist: Jim Mazza/ www.mazzaart.com*

common between the two records. Maybe a couple of tracks, like "Earthshine," I could see coming out of this record. But *Vapor Trails* was a much more personal record, a much more difficult record to make, for sure. This record was just a joy. At every moment, there wasn't a single difficult time we had on this record. Whereas with most of *Vapor Trails*, it was a struggle to make that record."

The good vibes carried on over to the cover art, the claustrophobic blacks and reds of *Vapor Trails* giving way to bright tropical, aquamarine hues that set the tone for the buoyant, boisterous percussive tracks enclosed. "The cover came from a game board, and the game is Lela, an ancient Indian game," noted Alex. "And the source of the game we're familiar with is snakes and ladders. It's a game of karma, and you go through the squares and move up on the arrows, whatever karmic number you land on, on the square, and your bad karma sends you back down on the back of the snake. And a lot of the record deals with that duality of east/west, good/bad, love/hate, and it's really about life, this record. And to me, thematically, it's probably a little broader than it has been for a while. We always work on some sort of a theme, but with this one, it touches on a lot of different aspects of the human condition and how we live together, things that we believe in, things we don't believe in."

The fun Rush had making *Snakes & Arrows* would perpetuate the celebratory mood of the band as they operated in the live-centric years leading up to its release. But now with the legitimacy of a well-reviewed new album under their belts, Rush would essentially work happily as well as strategically to keep the party going, death of the music business be damned, full speed ahead fired by . . . steampunk.

Snakes & Arrows tour, Madison Square Garden, New York City, September 17, 2007. © *Frank White*

"We have an incredibly diverse appeal, I'd like to think. Some fans are strictly technical fans geeking out on the drummer or the weird chord formations. There are other fans that have felt a connection to the spirit of our songs, the way they resonate thematically, a more emotional appeal. You can have two Rush fans sitting side-by-side listening to different aspects."

—Geddy Lee, quoted by Arye Dworken, *Heeb*, 2009

2008–2011

DIGITAL MEN: RUSH IN A WORLD WITHOUT RECORDS

THE MUSIC INDUSTRY IN THE MODERN AGE has been defined by the demise of physical product, specifically the inexorable decline and inevitable death of the CD format. What passes for sage advice in this blighted environment is the idea that it's now all about the live show and merchandising from the booth at gigs as well as online. In retrospect, it would seem as if Rush had exhibited some sort of genius foresight to be triumphing in the here and now. Through tireless touring, a huge variety of well-designed and reasonably priced merchandise, and most importantly, through its reputation as putting on one of the most elaborate, expensive, and technically brilliant shows in the business, Rush seems set to sail right through the handwringing o'er drastically reduced sales figures for full-length rock 'n' roll albums.

Becoming pop-culture heroes doesn't hurt either. Following up yet another concert experience, *Snakes & Arrows Live*, issued on April 15, 2008, Rush played live on television for the first time since 1975, crunching through "Tom Sawyer" on *The Colbert Report*, a typically rarified choice for

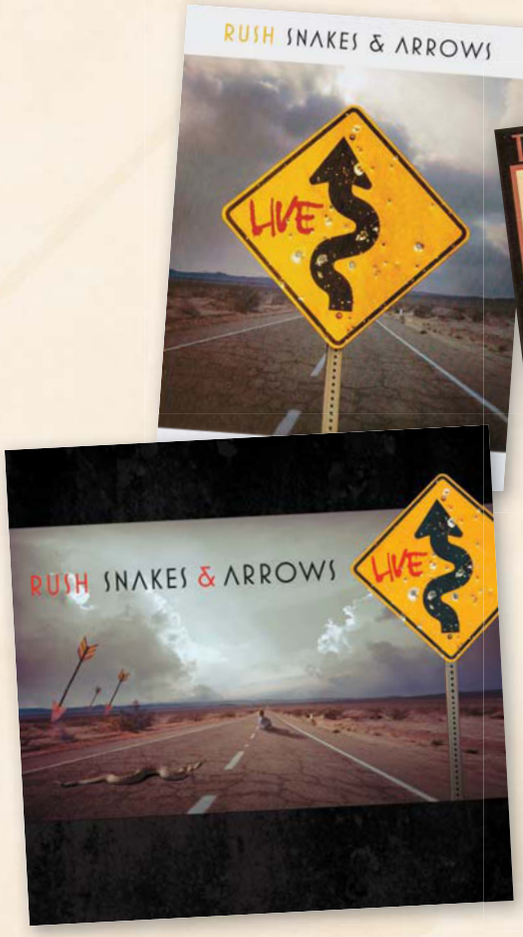
Time Machine tour, Charter One Pavilion, Chicago, July 5, 2010. *Lyle A. Waisman/Getty Images*

Final performance of the *Snakes & Arrows* tour, Verizon Wireless Music Center, Noblesville, Indiana, July 24, 2008. *Paul Warner/WireImage/Getty Images*

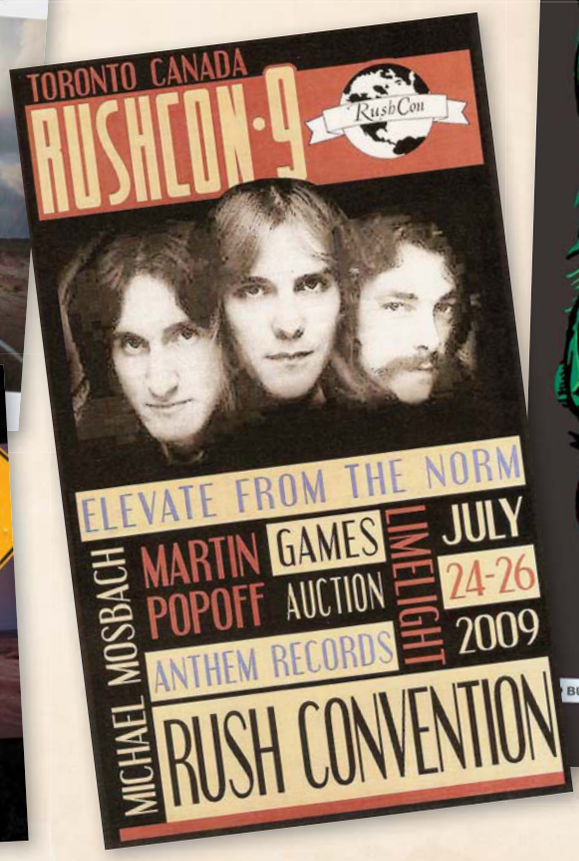
Rush's return to TV. Completing a one-two punch for long-suffering fans, the band's appearance on *Colbert* coincided with their first full feature in *Rolling Stone* magazine, the gist of which was Rush's emerging state of cool. It does not go unnoticed by fans, however, that the issue was a rare one for the magazine in that the cover included no headline or tag text, only a photo of President Obama, denying Rush that extra spot of glory.

By this point, Neil had issued two more hit travel memoirs, *Traveling Music: Playing Back the Soundtrack to My Life and Times*, and *Road Show: Landscape with Drums—A Concert Tour by Motorcycle*, while Alex got the biggest laughs, starring in one of the highlight episodes (May 2003) of Canada's legendary *Trailer Park Boys* comedy series, then appearing briefly in both the *Trailer Park Boys* movies. In March 2009, Rush figured prominently in the storyline of the movie *I Love You, Man*, appearing on screen as well. Shortly thereafter, Neil and his photographer wife, Carrie Nuttall, would have a daughter together, while Neil was soon to have yet another book published, this one called *Far and Away: A Prize Every Time*, with Carrie having put together a book of her photography.

Meanwhile, Geddy, art and book collector (with fine wine to go with both—more than five thousand bottles), in June 2008 combined two of his other hobbies, baseball and philanthropy, by donating his autographed Negro League baseball collection to the Negro Leagues Baseball Museum in Kansas City. Much of his collection remains, along with a vast knowledge concerning the design of baseball parks all over North America, one of Geddy's interests.



The *Snakes & Arrows* tour was documented in a CD and DVD released in April 2008 and November 2008, respectively. *Author collection*



RushCon 9 poster. *Author collection*

Snakes & Arrows tour, Ft. Lauderdale, Florida. *Artist: Chuck Loose/Iron Forge Press/ www.ironforgepress.com*

After the *Snakes & Arrows* tour (June through October 2007) was reprised as the *Snakes & Arrows Live* tour (April through July 2008), Rush came off the road for two years. What better time to accede to the myriad demands of Sam Dunn and Scot McFadyen of Banger Films—makers of *Metal: A Headbanger's Journey*, *Global Metal*, and *Iron Maiden: Flight 666*—who had embarked upon a painstaking, meticulous telling of the Rush story in documentary form (disclosure: this writer worked full-time on the film). Culled from more than a hundred hours of interviews, a vast library of concert footage, and a mountain of memorabilia and photography, the Grammy-nominated *Beyond the Lighted Stage* debuted at the Tribeca Film Festival on April 24, 2010, with wider release as well as issue on DVD arriving two months later. Selling double platinum, the movie did wonders for Rush's name recognition in the mainstream, its serious tone and professional crafting truly marking the band's arrival as a household name as history-making rock 'n' rollers.

Coinciding with the increased stature and profile afforded by the film—not to mention the band's star on Hollywood's Walk of Fame (June 2010)—Rush hit the road for what would be called the *Time Machine* Tour, featuring stage props and designs inspired by steampunk, a form of old-time science fiction that pays homage to Victorian style, most cogently represented in visual form by mechanical contraptions made of riveted metal, their cogs and levers powered by belching steam. Picture *The Fabulous World of Jules Verne* and *Frankenstein* crossed with Johnny Depp's *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* and you sorta get the drift.

However, the Victorian vibe of the tour was essentially a cart-before-the-horse construct that originated with Neil's steampunk theme as applied to the forthcoming new

Culled from more than a hundred hours of interviews, a vast library of concert footage, and a mountain of memorabilia and photography, the Grammy-nominated *Beyond the Lighted Stage* sold double platinum in DVD and did wonders for Rush's name recognition in the mainstream. *All author collection*

The band addresses the media before their induction into the Canadian Songwriters Hall of Fame in Toronto on March 28, 2010. *AP Photo/The Canadian Press, Chris Young*

Retrospective III, released March 2009, covered the band's years on Atlantic Records.

Working Men, released in November 2009, captured fan favorites performed live from 2002 to 2009.

Time Machine tour, Tulsa, Oklahoma.
Artist: Thom Self

studio album, *Clockwork Angels*, suspended in animation so the band could go back on the road. Tantalizingly, however, Rush did manage to advance-issue two raucous, heavy new tracks, "Caravan" and "BU2B," both of which have been played live on the tour.

"Sometimes they pile up," noted Alex, describing what it's like to write with Neil in this day and age. "It's not unusual that he pushes something every time around. 'Have a listen to this now,' or 'Check this out.' But we gravitate to what we gravitate to. And it tends to be something that is more modern or current that he is writing. And I have to say that, Geddy and Neil working together, it's a marvel, how they get it all together. It's done so professionally and respectful. It's gotta be tough for Neil, though—spend all this time writing a song and Geddy might pull one line from it, and say, 'This I really like. Can we build a song around this one line?'" Groans all around. "Yeah! [laughs]. And I'm sure that's the response. And Neil says, 'Yeah, I'll have a look at that, I'll see what I can do.' And Geddy comes in, and then, 'This whole chorus is happening. Can we just do a shift? What if we actually move this to here?' So he's really great that way. And I have to say, and that's not with all lyrics. But I think it's always for the best—then Geddy can sing them with conviction."

The two new tracks, essentially digital releases, coupled with the band's ceaseless attention to the live experience, underscored Rush's grasp of music industry realities in 2012. Last album out, Neil was famously said to have muttered to himself as he signed his record contract, "We'll never see a dime of this." While discussing *Clockwork Angels*, the

Time Machine tour, Giant Center, Hershey, Pennsylvania, April 8, 2011. *Brian Hinelin/CORBIS*

Alex and Geddy at the band's Hollywood Walk of Fame star ceremony, June 25, 2010. *s_bukley/Shutterstock.com*

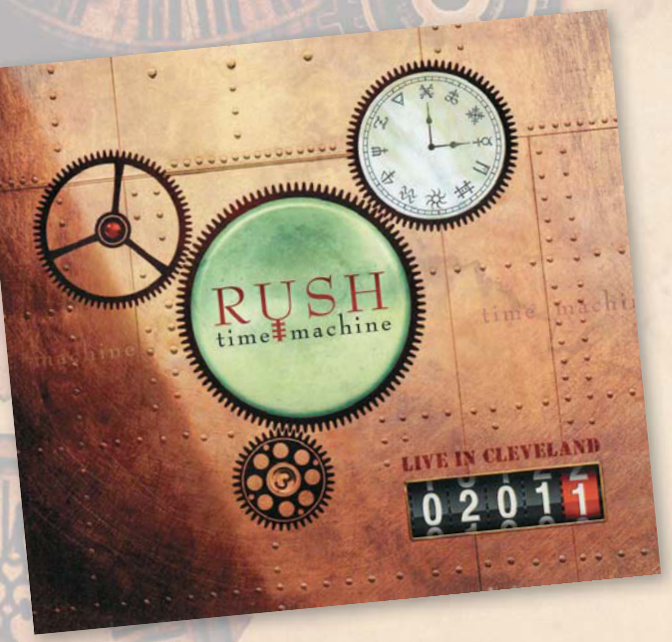
guys openly conjectured about possibly not issuing a CD at all and, in any event, releasing songs to the 'net as they were completed, having done just that with the first two. Further acceding to what was seen as smart management of career in the modern age, Rush obliged with a live set that included one of their classic albums executed in its entirety.

The *Moving Pictures* set would be issued as *Moving Pictures: Live 2011*, and the wider set, in video and audio, as *Time Machine: Live in Cleveland 2011*. Final word on Rush at this particular state and place of grace goes to Peart, who penned the following for the *Cleveland Plain Dealer*:

Despite the usual pressure of performing a show that you know is being "immortalized," the three of us felt we had played pretty well that night. And of course the audience was incandescent! We had given the directing job to the Banger guys, Scot and Sam, because their documentary about us had obviously cast us in a new sort of "lighted stage." We thought they would bring a fresh eye to a live concert DVD. We reviewed early edits, to approve their general approach, then just left them to it. The results justified our decisions and our trust, and just as we were very proud of the Time Machine Tour, we are pleased with its presentation. It is different from any of our previous concert DVDs, with more focus on the audience, and it highlights something special that only people who have been there will understand: the relationship between us and the audience.

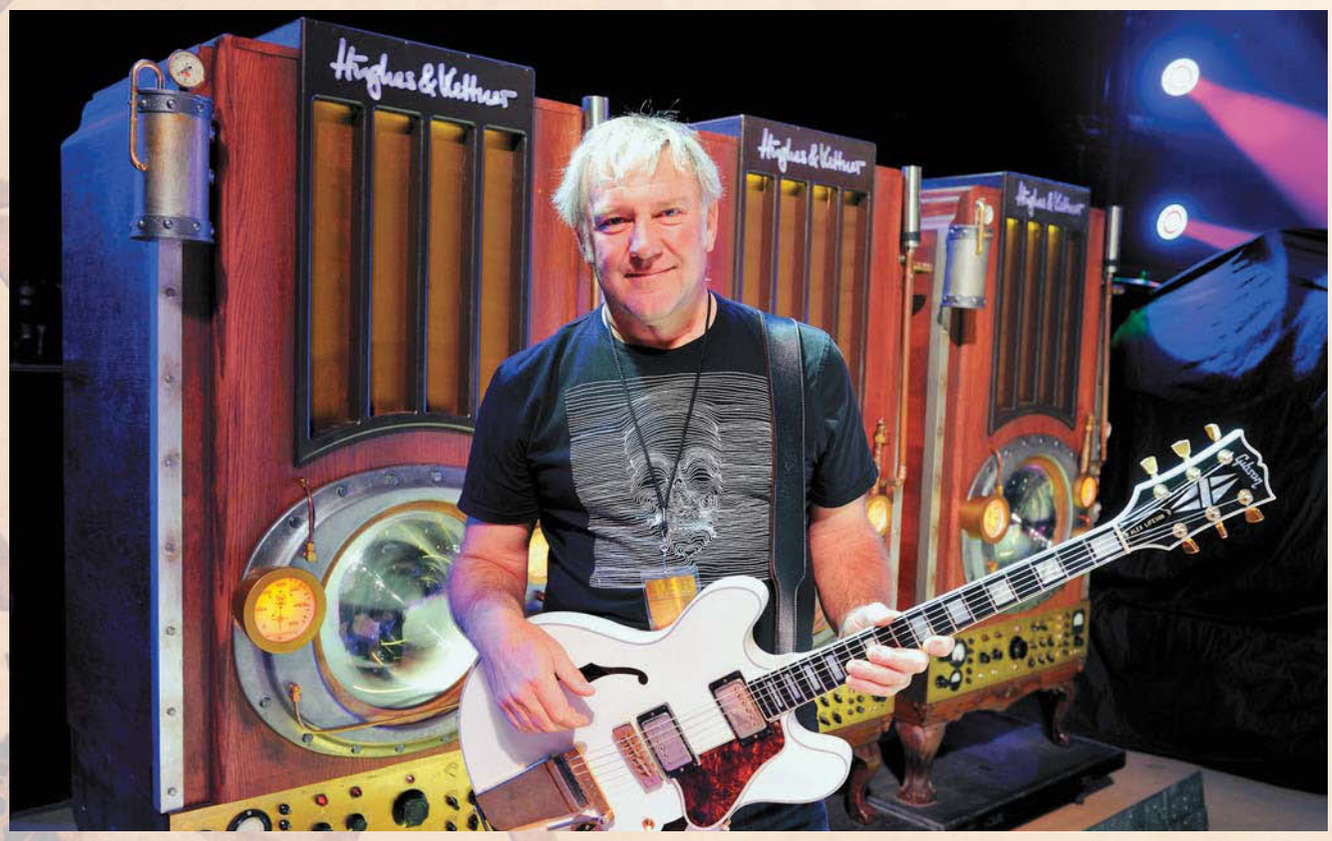
Seven months later, in November 2011, as we release that performance into the world, we are back in the studio in Toronto, working on the Clockwork Angels *project that we started almost two years ago, before the* Time Machine *tour. In fact, the first two chapters of the story, "Caravan" and "BU2B," were part of that show.*

I guess what we're creating now is the rest of that story, literally and metaphorically. The show is over—on with the show! That's the way we roll.

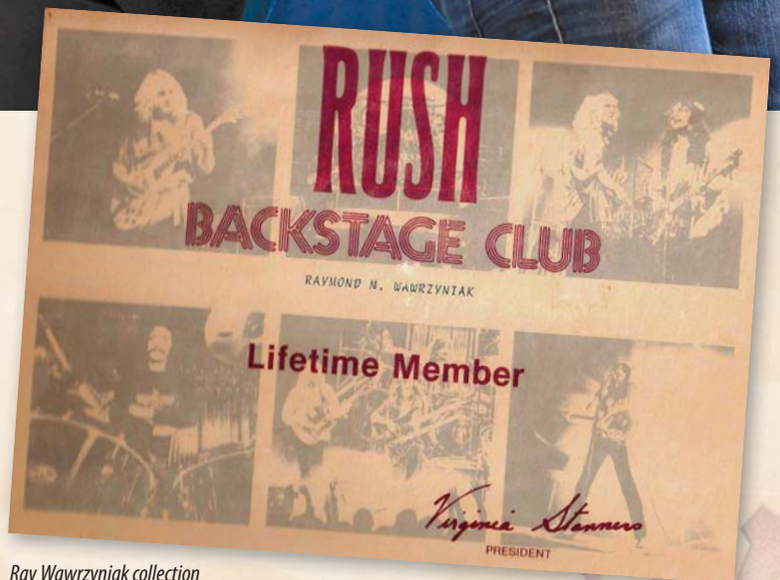


Time Machine 2011: Live in Cleveland was a concert DVD, Blu-ray, and double CD filmed on April 15, 2011, in Cleveland, Ohio, and released in November 2011.

Photo shoot for *Total Guitar Magazine*, LG Arena, Birmingham, England, May 22, 2011. *Gavin Roberts/* Total Guitar *Magazine via Getty Images*



Time Machine tour, US Airways Center, Phoenix, Arizona, June 16, 2011. *AP Photo/Roy Dabner*



Ray Wawrzyniak collection

"Marvel at *Clockwork Angels* for one or all of its many levels: its literary depth and steampunk cool; its creators' unity of purpose and preternatural musical sense; its lip-curling rock grooves and girthy production. Whatever Raskulinescz is doing, it's working. In the blue sky of this creative Indian summer and with that cultural tailwind behind them, Rush channel the impulse that made them so special all along on a modern progressive album right up there in their canon. After 40 years in a world lit only by lighters, there's no sign they're headed for that garden any time soon."

—Grant Moon, *Prog*, 2012

2012–2015

PUNCHING THE CLOCK

GO TO WORK, PUNCH THE CLOCK . . . as if middle class Canadians like Rush could resist making another big ol' album? Perhaps it was the realization that their albums are really their life's work or maybe a lightning bolt that there's been no full concept album yet for this unabashedly progressive and literary bunch and that they better get cracking while they can.

Clockwork Angels arrived on June 12, 2012, and reviews were effusive for an album that was heavy, experimental, progressive, and even old school. In the recording of it, the band yearned for the organic and got it from the drums up. Producer Nick Raskulinecz, true to the band's admiring words after working with him on *Snakes & Arrows*, was called back to help egg the band on. In addition to asking for something conceptual and blessed with the magic of young Rush, Nick helped these open-minded veterans find their fifth gear.

Clockwork Angels tour, Wells Fargo Center, Philadelphia, October 12, 2012. *Rex Features via AP Images*

CLOCKWORK ANGELS

Martin Popoff

Hard to fathom, but Rush turns in their first full-on concept album ever, and in the spirit of a unified theme from literary realms aloft, crafts a music backtrack that is their most opaque and purposeful yet, almost distractedly centered on boomy production and a jammy quality that coagulates and coalesces the tracks despite the expected vast versatility of passages and pathways on offer.

There's a steampunk vibe to what Neil proposes lyrically, but it's subtle and oblique, building for us that crucible as more of a visual place, inside of which he tells a universal though difficult tale concerning the vagaries and wantonness of time and its tug on us toward the leveling effect of the grave.

It's no surprise that advance singles "Caravan" and "BU2B" are the most-behaved and *Snakes & Arrows*–like tunes of the eccentric bunch, both having been recorded a year and a half earlier and then trotted out digitally and live until we're done with them. Sure, they fit the album's heavy, tribal, combative totality, but the rest of it is where *Clockwork Angels* really heats up, evoking visions of *Red*-era King Crimson and classic Van der Graaf Generator as Rush immerse their listeners in a jungle of bass-dominated wattage from the back end of 1974.

Yea and verily, there's something very English about the music, which again, fits steampunk's identification with the Victorian era, Rush forsaking their recent short stabs at progressive origami for sprawling, wallowing journeys with illogical twists and turns, seemingly built from the relentless drums up, Peart bashing away with a sixth sense for groove missing from much of the band's math rock catalog, especially circa *Power Windows* clear through to *Roll the Bones*.

Another Anglophile dimension to the album is its dark and complicated post-punk vibe, a rainy Manchester and moors effect found within tracks like "The Anarchist," "Carnies," and "Seven Cities of Gold," each with expressive, attacking playing from Alex, but mournful of melody, and then changing (like British weather) for the next pessimistic chord pattern, if in fact, chords can express ideas like time slipping away on us or time being indifferent at best, malicious at worst. "Seven Cities of Gold" in particular evokes the complicated relationship within post-punk between trundling bass lines leading the charge and guitar as texturizer. Some have argued Geddy's bass is actually too loud on the record—that we can hear for the first time both lots of articulation and bass as a frequency. If so, it only enhances the warmth and power of the record, an effect also achieved by pushing his vocals back in the mix.

Late in the sequence, anchor and advance single "Headlong Flight" opens with a "Bastille Day" quote before displaying an intensification of the band's sense of arrangement possibility, of fill, of spontaneity, and then come chorus time, a recurring but weirdly dark and proggy Beatle-esque quality. Speaking of Beatles, Rush is not afraid to use strings as a weapon, the sawing away on *Clockwork Angels* used almost entirely to bum us out, even if closing epic "The Garden" offers much beauty, aided and abetted by the album's biggest dose of strings (sixteen-piece, all real) o'er acoustic guitars, rare on this over-the-shoulder-boulder-holder of an album.

All told, *Clockwork Angels* is as true to the marriage of progressive and metal as the formulative records from *Moving Pictures* on back. And yet, the approach and end effect is completely different, a hot mess if you will, shaggy, ragged, relentlessly riffy, and then hammered home by a most inspired rhythm section unaware of how they've dominated both vocals and guitar, despite Alex's raised quality and quantity of ideas, ideas that spill out of his bag one by one seemingly every ten seconds, like clockwork. In the end, from a band usually associated with snappy songs of bright and open architecture, *Clockwork Angel*s is a welcome and unexpectedly enveloping experience of sonic and psychic heaviness sure to keep fans confounded and surrounded for years to come.

The band receives the Lifetime Artistic Achievement Award at the Governor General's Performing Arts Awards 20th Anniversary Gala held May 5, 2012, in Ottawa. *George Pimentel/WireImage/Getty Images*

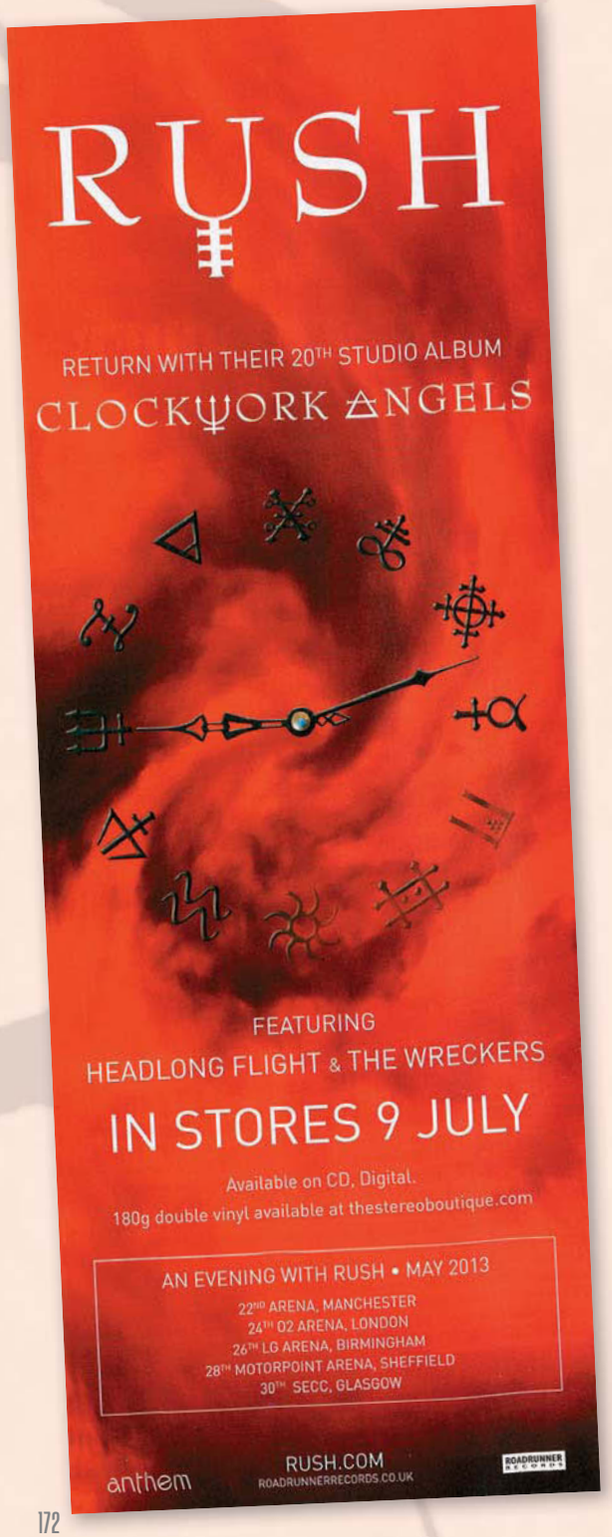
"In recent years I have been working deliberately to become more improvisational on the drums," remarked the Professor. "And these sessions were an opportunity to attempt that approach in the studio. I played through each song just a few times on my own, checking out patterns and fills that might work, then called in Booujzhe (Nick Raskulinecz). He stood in the room with me, facing my drums, with a music stand and a single drumstick—he was my conductor, and I was his orchestra. I later replaced that stick with a real baton."

Also on the drumming front, something so integral to *Clockwork Angels*, Neil's mentor Freddie Gruber had died at the age of eighty-four during the making of the album. "I had quite a ride. I wish I could do it all again," remarked Gruber in a moment of introspection once, to Neil's wife Carrie; Neil dutifully pays tribute to Gruber and that comment in the epic title track to the record, the song and much of the album being a reverie on the topic of the inexorable march of time.

Addressing the record's conceptual nature with *Classic Rock Revisited*'s Jeb Wright, Alex qualifies that, "We did a number of strictly concept pieces, but a long time ago we decided that we'd run that format through. We moved away from that in the late 1970s. At the same time, all of our records are all thematic and loosely connected; sometimes it is broader and sometimes it is narrower. Nick was really pushing for something like that; not specifically a concept but a story. We spread this one out over a couple of years and it ended up being a very nice way to work. It gave us a bit of breathing space, as we wrote in groups of songs. I think that always helps to get a little bit of variety. When you get into the studio and you record everything together, then it brings that consistency through it. I think we really achieved an interesting dynamic. We have a lot of songs that are different from each other. A lot of the songs are very cinematic and part of the story."

Ray Wawrzyniak collection

Ray Wawrzyniak collection



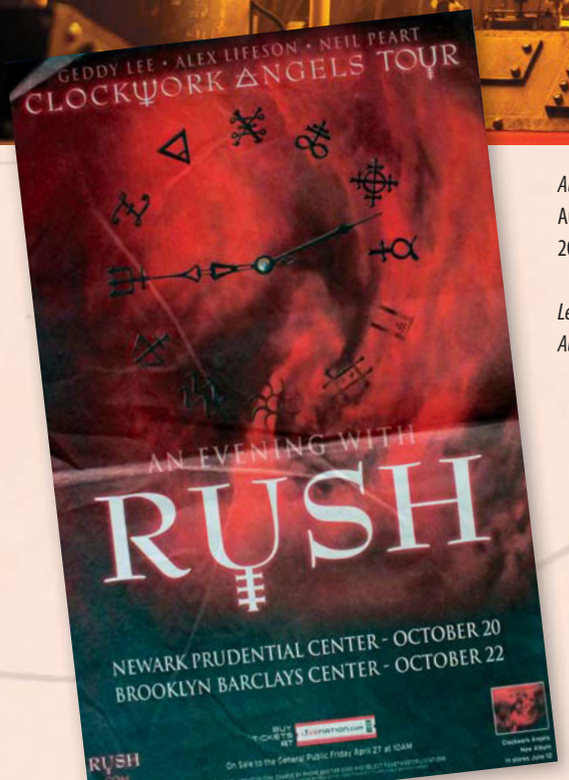
Still, there's a heaviness that is missing from the album's predecessor even though there were differing approaches to the recordings. "I used my Les Pauls and my Telecasters," says Alex, with respect to "BU2B," "which is a combo that I used to use quite frequently. It really was heavily layered with guitars and that was the idea for that song. The rest of the album, I really wanted to get away from that and I tried as much as possible to keep it simple. I think that is one of the refreshing aspects of the record. It has a lot of space in it and you can hear the drums clearly, you can hear the bass and the guitar; everything can be loud at the same time."

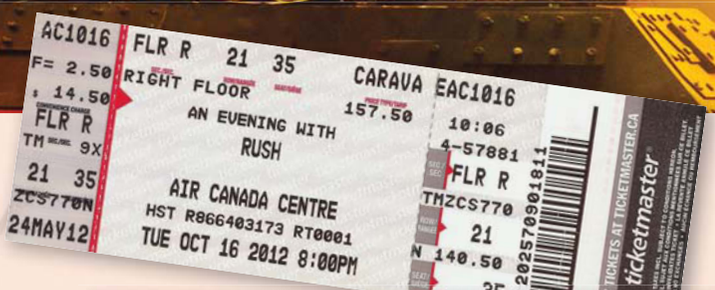
"Caravan" and the aforementioned "BU2B" were recorded at Blackbird Studios in Nashville fully a year and a half before the rest of the album, which was captured at a one-year-old studio on the east side of Toronto called Revolution Recording. It was here, in a gorgeous and open wood-paneled room, as fall turned to winter in 2011, that the band spent three months with the mercurial Nick nailing down the album's sprawling, monster tracks. After mixing at Henson in L.A., it was up to longtime Rush visualist Hugh Syme to work closely with Neil on the various dimensions of the artwork, including the incorporation of alchemical symbols—Neil had seen them in Diane Ackerman's book, *An Alchemy of Mind*—and the expected in-jokes such as setting the cover's clock at 9:12, or 21:12 in military time.

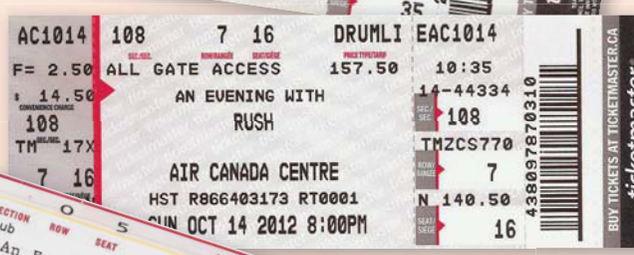
Despite the steampunk theme to the album and the thread of a storyline (greatly expanded upon in a book-form extension of the album by Kevin J. Anderson), the lyrics to *Clockwork Angels* are kept abstract and poetic enough so that the listener only gets a taste of the tale, coming away intrigued and possibly a tad perplexed. Geddy, speaking with *spin.com*, said, "The one thing that I wanted to avoid on this record was being a slave to the libretto. I didn't want the details of the story to start weighing down the individuality of any one song. I wanted the songs to be a collection that could stand on their own, outside of context of the whole story. When you look at a collection of songs like those on the Who's *Tommy*, you could pull 'I'm Free' out of that and it still stands on its own. But in connection to the story, it takes on another interpretation. So there was a lot of discussion about that. I think at one point, Neil was a little frustrated with my determination to keep the storyline minimal in a sense."

But make no mistake, *Clockwork Angels* is highly literary. Neil drew influence from the likes of Voltaire, Michael Ondaatje, John Barth, Cormac McCarthy, and Daphne du Maurier. His intellectual efforts are supported by similarly high-minded music. *Clockwork Angels*, although arguably the heaviest Rush album since perhaps *Counterparts*, is almost symphonic at times. Not only is there a David Campbell–conducted sixteen-piece orchestra used on five tracks, there is also an elegant piano passage in "The Garden" courtesy of Jason Sniderman. Both Alex and Geddy contribute keyboards to the album as well, in a manner that is much more about early Emerson, Lake & Palmer than it is *Hold Your Fire*.

Noted Alex in conversation with Mick Burgess, "We put down keyboard sample strings, and we really liked it, but we thought rather than use sampled strings we'd bring in a real orchestra, and Geddy and I were the catalysts for that. He's a real sucker for those sort of things. David Campbell did a great job on the arrangement. That really tugs at your heart. I think there's something that's really classic about that arrangement and really heartfelt. The song works really well as a closer, the final chapter of the story. That single cello note at the very end is very poignant."







Above: Clockwork Angels tour, the Palace, Auburn Hills, Michigan, September 18, 2012. *Chris Schwegler/CORBIS*

Left: New York Times ad, April 22, 2012. *Author collection*

Clockwork Angels tour, Air Canada Centre, Toronto, October 14, 2012. *George Pimentel/WireImage/ Getty Images*

"With this record, we really wanted to play and wanted to stretch out a little bit," continued Alex, back to the hard-hitting side of *Clockwork Angels*, which is most of it. "We wanted to have fun playing and also to strip things down a little. I think *Snakes & Arrows* in retrospect was a little bit dense because it was written on acoustic guitar, which played a major role in the production. We layered a lot of acoustics and electrics and I think we got just a little cloudy at times. I really like the record but with hindsight of living with it for a while we realized that we kind of overcooked it a bit. We really wanted to strip it down and have more of a three-piece feel to it. There's no rhythm guitar during the guitar solos and such like, which are things you end up doing as you like the sound of it because you like all the color, but it's not always necessary and I think the album comes across as a lot more powerful as a result."

Rush's induction into the Rock Hall will be remembered for years as the one most propelled by populist uprising. © *Kevin Winter/Getty Images*

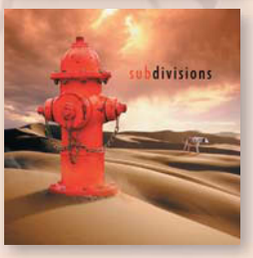
And power is what it's always been about with Rush. If at times, throughout the years, the music strived for and achieved more of a sense of subtlety, the power could and would shift to the strident drama of the band's hi-tech stage visuals. And always there was the power of Neil Peart's hard-polished lyrics, lyrics that year after year possess the power to inspire and sometimes even instruct.

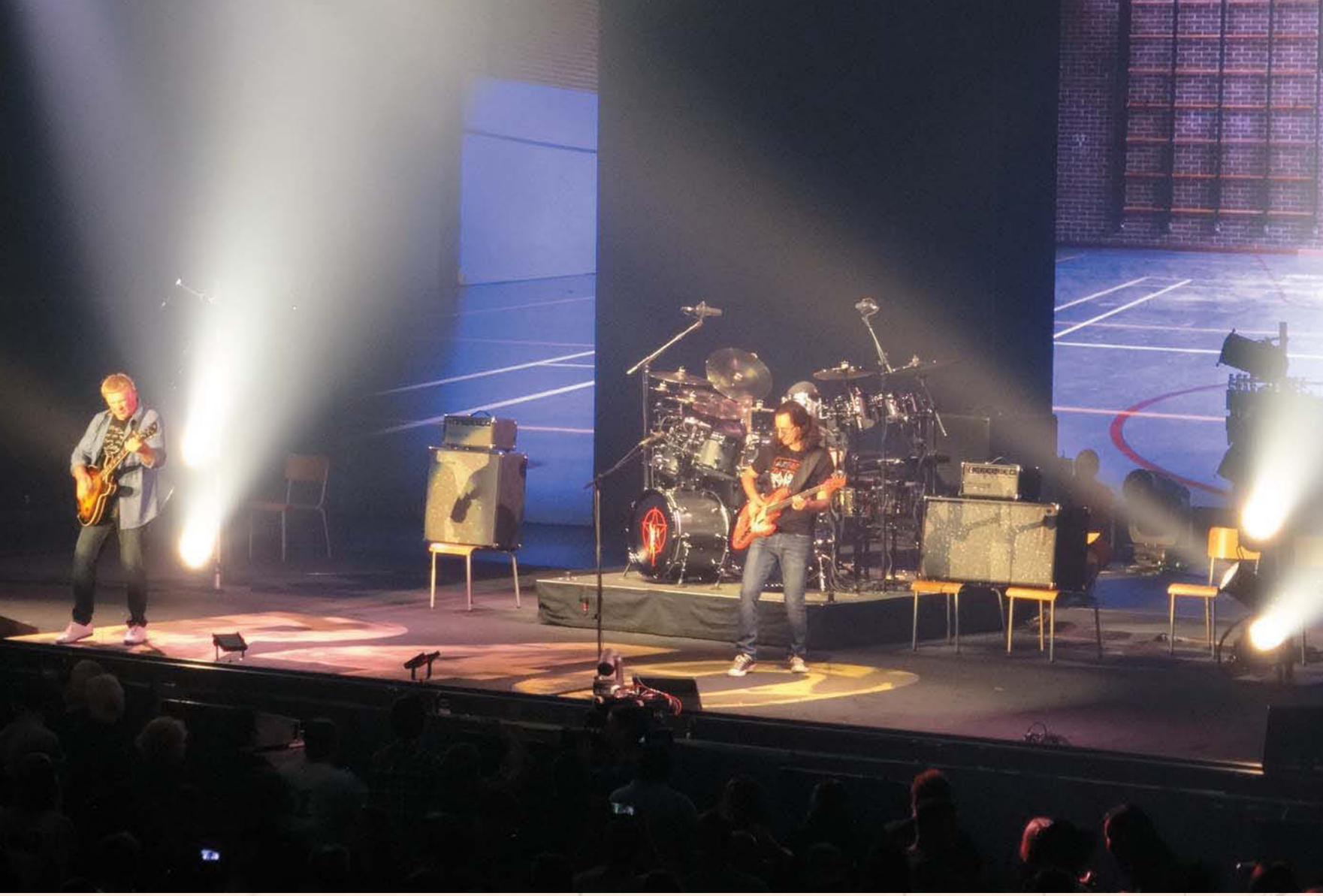
"The thing is when you're on this side of the fence, life is pretty normal," says Alex in closing, reflecting on the band's longevity and really quite good shot at survival for many years to come. "What you do is nothing particularly special. We set high standards so we always try to do our best and play our best. All of that percolates through to the rest of your life and how you treat other people and how you live with your family. You have the mark that you want to leave. Youth is a very volatile thing. When we were younger we set a very high standard for ourselves and we always wanted to reach our goals. We put a lot of pressure on ourselves and worked very fast. We generally had very little time to work on our records because we were touring so much. Everything that we ended up doing had this really giant ball of energy attached to it. Today, we feel a very relaxed confidence about our music, our songwriting, and also about our playing. We absolutely respect and trust each other now, more than we ever have. I think that's a very important aspect working the way we work and how we put records together. You have to be able to trust each other and not hold your own ideas as the most precious. We all try to do the best work we can do as a band—there is no one person more important than the whole. We've learned over forty years that this is the key to our success and our integrity."

There's no question that the sonic mayhem rifling through the songs of *Clockwork Angels* made for an action-packed and powerful tour in celebration of this almost universally beloved new album, especially given that Neil, Geddy, and Alex have expanded upon the heavy metal chaos of steampunk, visually speaking within the new stage show, far beyond its use in the *Time Machine* tour.

And isn't it very cool, that just as the big main leg of the *Clockwork* walk came to a close, the band breaking for Christmas, that an early present arrived in the form of the long-awaited Rock and Roll Hall of Fame induction? Yes, indeed, the chorus of boos, catcalls, protests, and exhortations over the years from the Rush faithful—and they never got it louder from any other band's clanging fans—resulted in this most just of capitulations. Not that the boys care a Canadian snow owl's hoot, but there it was, announced December 11, 2012, Rush had joined the Hall, along with Heart, Public Enemy, Albert King, Randy Newman, and Donna Summer.

Various Rush tribute albums.





The genius *R40* concept illustrated; note the vintage amps on school chairs, the high school championship banners, and the basketball court. © *Trevor Shaikin*

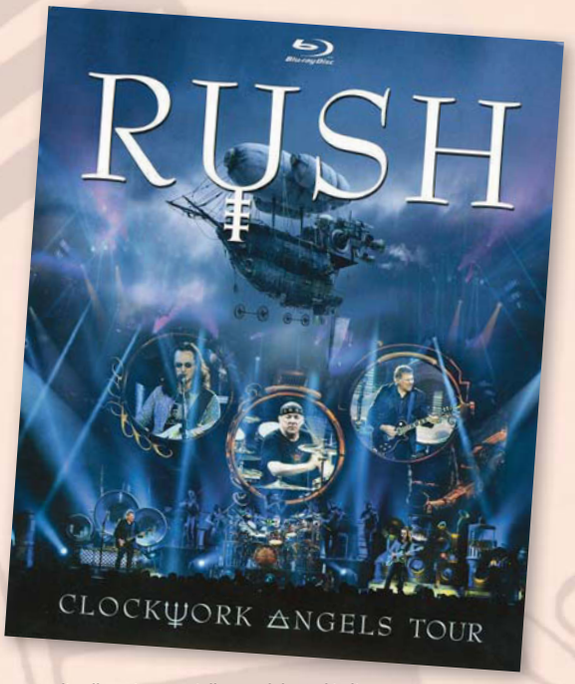
No question the band was on a high, blessed with an effusively received album and selling concert tickets like crazy. No one would have pegged Alex to give the most famous induction speech of all time, but there he was with the "blah blah blah," with a cringing Geddy ready to "kill" him. Yet watch it again, and the man said what he needed to say in a language fans understood. The official inductors were Dave Grohl and Taylor Hawkins, who represented ably the band's influence on generations of rockers at least twice removed from the root. The Rock and Roll Hall of Fame induction took place April 18, 2013, kicking off the second leg of the *Clockwork Angels* tour, which was mostly a North American affair, the band winding up their elaborate steampunk tour de force on August 4, 2013, in Kansas City, Missouri.

With the *Clockwork Angels* tour out of the way (the fresh wrinkle being the classical accompaniment), Rush took a nine-month break and then proceeded to celebrate forty years (okay, forty-one!) of fearless prog metal exploration with a summation. *R40* found the boys climbing back into their time machine and guiding fans through their vast catalog in reverse order, closing with "Working Man," although technically a snippet of a song appropriately older than that, the non-LP "Garden Road." Attendant to the set list

was the innovative idea of creating an approximate visual of the stage set that fans would have seen at the time, Rush's loyal crack team of planners and muscle not forgetting to remove amplifiers as required and switch up the band's instruments—seeing Neil's kit retro-transformed through the ages was of particular pleasure to the faithful. Also of landmark status was seeing "Losing It" performed for the first time ever, in Toronto, the band accompanied by original violinist Ben Mink.

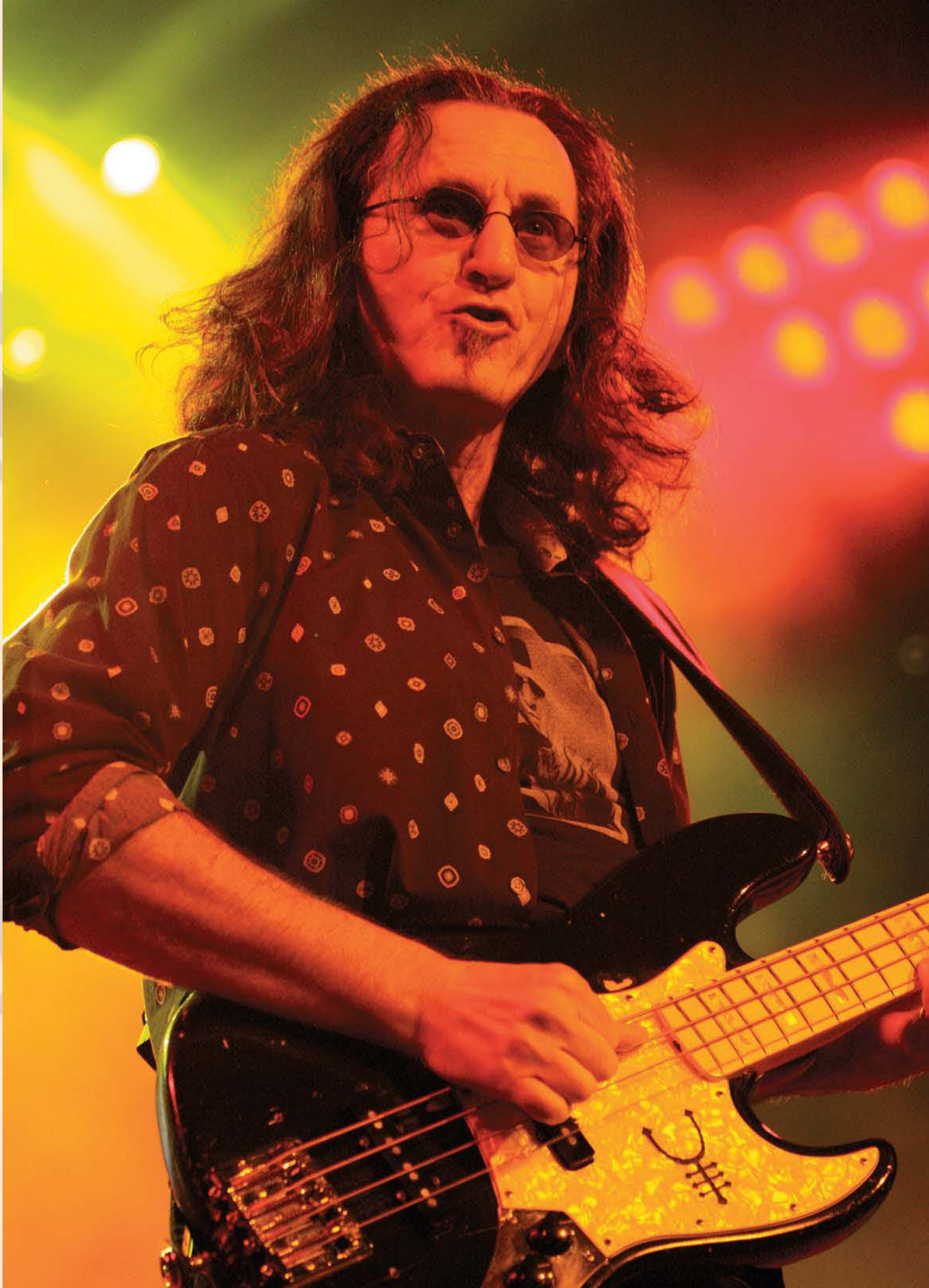
The band's fortieth anniversary was celebrated product-wise with a massive box set comprising the band's more recent live DVDs but also many bonus bits, the highlight being a full showing of the now famed (and found languishing unmarked at the Anthem office) high school show featuring John Rutsey on drums and emcee duties. *R40* followed exactly a year later upon *Clockwork Angels Live*, an expansive CD and DVD release which captured the band in conceptual and classical mode in high def forever. There was also the release of *Vapor Trails Remixed*, righting some sort of wrong, as well as an Atlantic-years compilation and other permutations of the attendant new product that kept fans collecting, debating, and as always, grousing a bit about the pain to their pocketbooks.

But all of this expected activity generated by the office on Carlton Street was taking place amidst a growing shroud of mystery. The *R40* tour began on May 8, 2015, in Tulsa, Oklahoma, but it was the close of it on August 1 at the Forum in Inglewood, California, that really lifted eyebrows. Signaling an air of specialness, "Losing It" was performed for only the fourth time and the second time with Jonathan Dinklage from the band's Clockwork Angels String Ensemble on violin. And then cryptically, after the show, Neil didn't execute his usual perfunctory wave and dash off the stage. Instead, he bounded forward from behind his *R40*-proscribed reduced rig and did the long version of the band bow we usually see at shows, amusingly seeming to have to tap Alex and Geddy on the shoulder to indicate his presence. And although Geddy left the door open to "meeting again sometime," his goodbye was quite formal and with a theme of finality.



A studio album is essentially re-celebrated in live form for the second Rush record in a row.

The dark *Vapor Trails* album made brighter, inside and out.



Geddy, although perhaps least nagged by the aches and pains of age amongst our trio of heroes, ironically has the most challenging job of a rocker of advanced years—recreating the vigorous vocal performances of decades past.
© Greg Olma

Spotlight on the Professor, Toronto, 2015. © *Dave McDonald*

Alex goes for a big guitar sound, Air Canada Centre, Toronto, June 19, 2015. © *Dave McDonald*

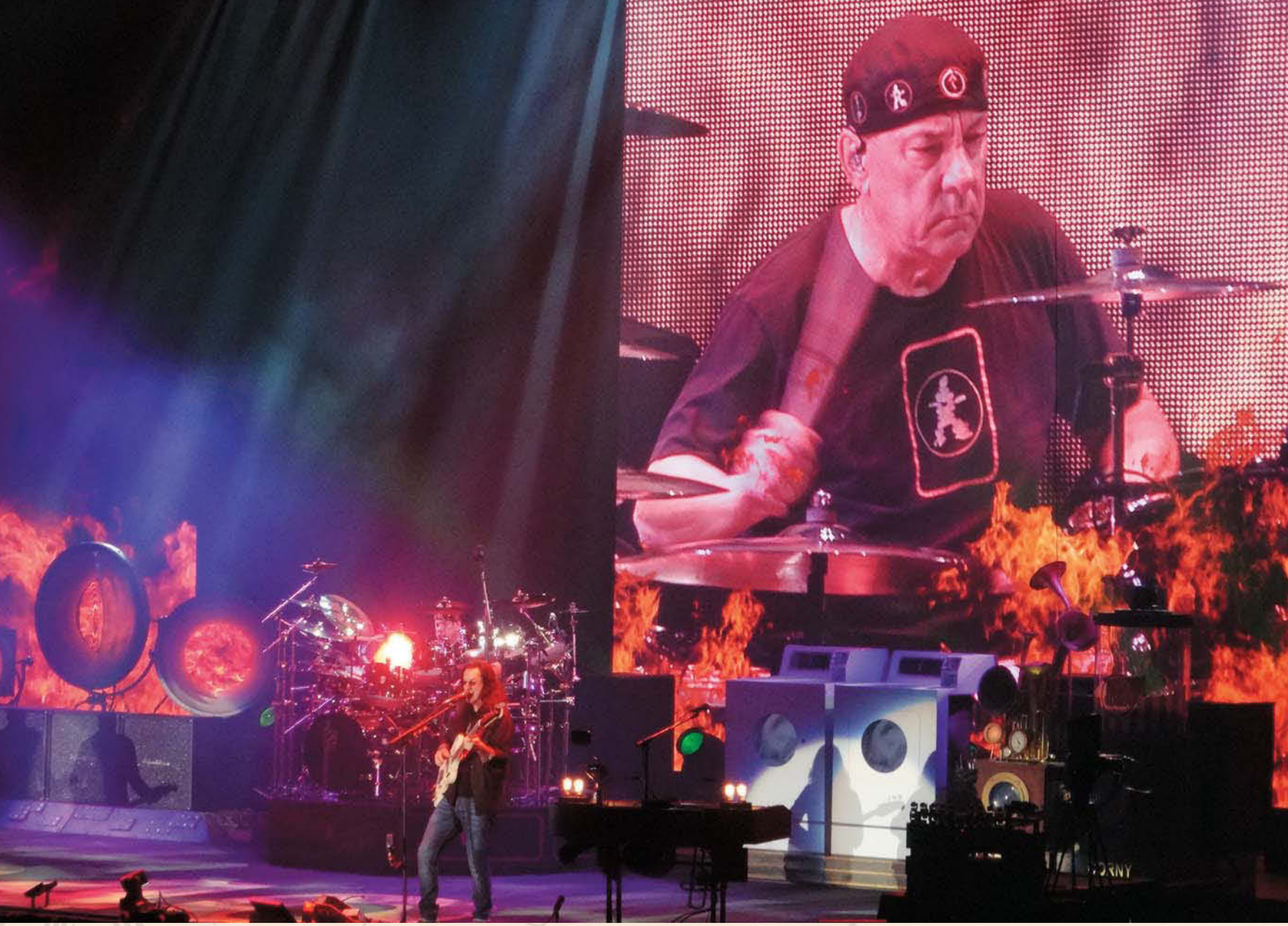
Author collection

Author collection

"(Our recent) time off was revealing," explains Alex, talking with Postmedia's Jane Stevenson as the tour neared conclusion. "We all really enjoyed it. And I think in view of the amount of physical work it takes, particularly for Neil, it's a very athletic endeavor for three or four months, so I think we're all starting to feel a little sorer. So we'll see how it goes. It wouldn't surprise me if we sort of slow down and look at this tour as maybe the last major tour. I don't see us breaking up or hanging it up, but certainly this kind of touring has become much more difficult. So maybe in the future we'd look at more special event kind of things. We've always talked about doing, say, five days at Radio City, five days at Massey Hall, those sorts of runs instead of five, six, seven months."

"It's a lot tougher at sixty-one than it was at twenty-one," continued Lifeson. "And we're all feeling the aches and pains of our advancing years. I have had arthritis for a long time and it's just a little more in the forefront, in terms of my hands. And you know Neil's had this chronic tendonitis in his arm, and his shoulders are starting to feel it; he plays so hard, so it only stands to reason that you need to warm up, you need to get in shape. We all go to the gym four or five times a week. It's not just sitting around and eating chips and smoking pot. I mean, that's fine, but to prep for a tour, it's a really serious endeavor."

"Sometimes it feels like no time goes by and then other times, it feels like a century," added Alex, addressing the scope of what the band had achieved. "It's such an unusual place to be. It was never something we ever expected or ever really dreamed about. When we were twenty-one, the longevity of most bands was between five and eight years. And that's kind of what we were counting on. We had already been together for six years and thought another five or six years would be



Someone forgot to empty the lint catcher. The Forum, Inglewood, California, August 1, 2015. © *Trevor Shaikin*

awesome. Make some records, that's great. So to be sitting here at (almost) sixty-one and be doing interviews for a tour that's basically sold out; it's just unbelievable to us."

"Everybody in the band has sort of a different attitude on this," mused a wary Geddy, in conversation with Jordan Zivitz from the *Montreal Gazette*. "I say I'm optimistic. I'm not sure my bandmates and pals would state it exactly the same way. I think you have to take that for what it is—it's my view, not necessarily the band view. It's a bit in flux, to be honest. I think before the tour started, there was a decided mood of the end of our touring life. And I know how much we've all enjoyed it so far. There's been no complaining and some very, very good playing. Maybe that's changed, but I don't feel comfortable speaking for the other two guys. It's a complicated subject, but there are a couple of issues at stake here. Neil has a young daughter, and he doesn't feel one hundred percent comfortable leaving her so much right now. This is kind of a second kick at the can for him, having a family. And rightfully so, he takes his responsibility as a dad very seriously. So that's an influence. Alex has had numerous health issues, but the overriding one seems to be that he has arthritis,

The Professor punching the clock in 2013. © *Dave McDonald*

as he's said in interviews now. And he's not sure how that's going to affect his ability to play at the top of his game. And it is in his hands, and that's every musician's nightmare. So those are two factors that I would say are the critical factors in whether we are able to continue to tour or not.

"I can certainly see us writing together and putting a musical project together," continued Lee. "I cannot really tell you how that would present itself in a live situation. I don't know that there is the will from my two partners to do any kind of tour. But I wouldn't exclude the possibility of doing a set of dates or some one-off things. I don't mean to be evasive, but I can't really answer the question about any future touring, because I don't really know. And the other guys . . . it's an ongoing conversation, and I would say that it's a decision that's in flux."

Then again, weeks later, Neil seemed to close the door a little further, musing out loud—again, not in any formal way—that like an athlete, one must know when to retire, and that this just might well be his time.

But given the healthy attitude and admiration shared between Geddy, Alex, and Neil, and the band's ability to reflect and adapt after time away, there's at least some reason to believe that the completed *R40* tour—along with the long-awaited Hall of Fame induction—doesn't have to constitute the victory lap it sure looked like that night at the Forum. With *Clockwork Angels*, Rush had decisively punched in again. Now they've punched out to spend time with family, to genuflect, and do all the life-rich things they do that make them rounded human beings. And so Rush fans might well hope again, despite Neil's words otherwise, that as with previous times away, before long they'll be punching the clock once more, itching to build a contraption that runs faster and louder than *Clockwork Angels*. It's been the reason they get up in the morning and it's also what's kept fans on the edge of their concert seats for over 40 years. In that light, let's hope L.A. proves not to be the long goodbye all rock 'n' rollers—and indeed all of us—must face.

Alex gets focused while Geddy is surprised to hear "different strings." © *Dave McDonald*

SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY

A few notes on this discography. I've decided to provide the greatest level of detail for the studio albums, then less for live albums, compilations, etc. I figured producers and track timings for that stuff are not of crucial importance. As well, this is a U.S. discography, with U.S. chart placements, U.S. certifications, and, when we get to singles, official U.S. singles only (save for the all-important indie debut).

Side 1 and Side 2 designations are provided for everything up to *Presto*, the last Rush album before the pronounced shift from LP to CD. Where possible, I've endeavored to reduce repetition, for example, for live albums that were issued both in audio and video format. Catalog numbers are the originals, as are the "issues," that is, I've not gotten into first and second and third appearance on CD, remasters, audiophile recordings, or the like. Summing up, the general idea was to limit this to the core, relevant discography (and, yes, videography), due to space restrictions but also to diminished returns in terms of interest level and sheer readability. Anything that came out only as digital is also not included. Also, I've skipped chart placements for videos and DVDs, arguing that the only chart measure that carries enough significance to warrant mention is the *Billboard* 200 for albums. One final thing (and I'm sure there are a few more of these gremlins): originally and then occasionally, it's "Freewill" and other times it's "Free Will."

Studio Albums

Rush
Label: Mercury
Catalog No.: SRM-1-1011
Release date: July 1, 1974
Peak U.S. *Billboard:* No. 105
U.S. RIAA certification: Gold
Producer: Rush

Side 1: 1. Finding My Way 5:03; 2. Need Some Love 2:16; 3. Take a Friend 4:27; 4. Here Again 7:30
Side 2: 1. What You're Doing 4:19; 2. In the Mood 3:36; 3. Before and After 5:33; 4. Working Man 7:07
Note: Issued in Canada first, as an indie, March 1, 1974: Moon Records (MN-100). Original Moon issue features red logo on cover, changed to pink for the U.S. issue and subsequent Canadian issues. U.S. issue includes additional tracks thanks to Donna Halper of WMMS. Original eight-track issue also uses red logo.

Fly By Night
Label: Mercury
Catalog No.: SRM-1-1023
Release date: February 15, 1975
Peak U.S. *Billboard:* No. 113
U.S. RIAA certification: Gold
Producer: Rush and Terry Brown

Side 1: 1. Anthem 4:10; 2. Best I Can 3:24; 3. Beneath, Between & Behind 3:00; 4. By-Tor & the Snow Dog—I. At the Tobes of Hades, II. Across the Styx, III. Of the Battle, IV. Epilogue 8:57
Side 2: 1. Fly by Night 3:20; 2. Making Memories 2:56; 3. Rivendell 5:00; 4. In the End 6:51

Caress of Steel
Label: Mercury
Catalog No.: SRM-1-1046
Release date: September 24, 1975
Peak U.S. *Billboard:* No. 148
U.S. RIAA Certification: Gold
Producer: Rush and Terry Brown

Side 1: 1. Bastille Day 4:36; 2. I Think I'm Going Bald 3:35; 3. Lakeside Park 4:07; 4. The Necromancer—I. Into Darkness 4:20; II. Under the Shadow 4:25; III. Return of the Prince 3:51
Side 2: 1. The Fountain of Lamneth—I. In the Valley 4:17; II. Didacts and Narpets 1:00; III. No One at the Bridge 4:15; IV. Panacea 3:12; V. Bacchus Plateau 3:12; VI. The Fountain 3:48
Note: U.S. cassette issue features different track sequence.

2112
Label: Mercury
Catalog No.: SRM-1-1079
Release date: April 1, 1976
Peak U.S. *Billboard:* No. 61
U.S. RIAA certification: 3 x Platinum
Producer: Rush and Terry Brown

Side 1: 1. 2112—I. Overture 4:32; II. The Temples of Syrinx 2:13; III. Discovery 3:30; IV. Presentation 3:40; V. Oracle: The Dream 2:00; VI. Soliloquy 2:23; VII. Grand Finale 2:18; Total: 20:36

Side 2: 1. A Passage to Bangkok 3:30; 2. The Twilight Zone 3:14; 3. Lessons 3:48; 4. Tears 3:29; 5. Something for Nothing 3:56

A Farewell to Kings
Label: Mercury
Catalog No.: SRM-1-1184
Release date: September 1, 1977
Peak U.S. *Billboard:* No. 33
U.S. RIAA certification: Platinum
Producer: Rush and Terry Brown

Side 1. 1. A Farewell to Kings 5:49; 2. Xanadu 11:05
Side 2. 1. Closer to the Heart 2:52; 2. Cinderella Man 4:19; 3. Madrigal 2:33; 4. Cygnus X-1, Book One—The Voyage 10:21
Note: Only Rush album issued on vinyl in Russia, with different cover.

Hemispheres
Label: Mercury
Catalog No.: SRM-1-3743
Release date: October 29, 1978
Peak U.S. *Billboard:* No. 47
U.S. RIAA certification: Platinum
Producer: Rush and Terry Brown

Side 1: 1. Cygnus X-I Book II Hemispheres—I. Prelude 4:30; II. Apollo Bringer of Wisdom; III. Dionysus Bringer of Love 4:36; IV. Armageddon: The Battle of Heart and Mind 2:52; V. Cygnus Bringer of Balance 5:00; VI. The Sphere a Kind of Dream 1:09; Total: 18:07
Side 2: 1. Circumstances 3:41; 2. The Trees 4:46; 3. La Villa Strangiato—I. Buenos Nochas, Mein Froinds!; II. To Sleep, Perchance To Dream . . . ; III. Strangiato Theme; IV. A Lerxst in Wonderland; V. Monsters!; VI. The Ghost of the Aragon; VII. Danforth and Pape; VIII. The Waltz of the Shreves; IX. Never Turn Your Back on a Monster!; X. Monsters! (Reprise); XI. Strangiato Theme (Reprise); XII. A Farewell to Things 9:35

Permanent Waves
Label: Mercury
Catalog No.: SRM-1-4001
Release date: January 1, 1980
Peak U.S. *Billboard:* No. 4
U.S. RIAA certification: Platinum
Producer: Rush and Terry Brown

Side 1: 1. The Spirit of Radio 4:54; 2. Freewill 5:23; 3. Jacob's Ladder 7:50
Side 2: 1. Entre Nous 4:37; 2. Different Strings 3:50; 3. Natural Science—I. Tide Pools; II. Hyperspace; III. Permanent Waves 9:27

Moving Pictures
Label: Mercury
Catalog No.: SRM-1-4013
Release date: February 12, 1981
Peak U.S. *Billboard:* No. 3
U.S. RIAA certification: 4 x Platinum
Producer: Rush and Terry Brown

Side 1: 1. Tom Sawyer 4:33; 2. Red Barchetta 6:07; 3. YYZ 4:23
Side 2: 1. Limelight 4:18; 2. The Camera Eye 10:55; 3. Witch Hunt—Part III of Fear 4:43; 4. Vital Signs 4:45
Note: First Rush album issued on CD.

Signals
Label: Mercury
Catalog No.: SRM-1-4063
Release date: September 9, 1982
Peak U.S. *Billboard:* No. 10
U.S. RIAA certification: Platinum
Producer: Rush and Terry Brown

Side 1: 1. Subdivisions 5:33; 2. The Analog Kid 4:46; 3. Chemistry 4:56; 4. Digital Man 6:20
Side 2: 1. The Weapon 6:22; 2. New World Man 3:41; 3. Losing It 4:51; 4. Countdown 5:49
Note: Last Rush album issued on eight-track tape. Second Rush album issued on CD.

Grace Under Pressure
Label: Mercury
Catalog No.: 818 476-1
Release date: April 12, 1984
Peak U.S. *Billboard:* No. 10
U.S. RIAA certification: Platinum
Producer: Rush and Peter Henderson

Side 1: 1. Distant Early Warning 4:59; 2. Afterimage 5:04; 3. Red Sector A 5:10; 4. The Enemy Within—Part I of Fear 4:34
Side. 2: 1. The Body Electric 5:00; 2. Kid Gloves 4:18; 3. Red Lenses 4:42; 4. Between the Wheels 5:44

Power Windows
Label: Mercury
Catalog No.: 826 098-1
Release date: October 29, 1985
Peak U.S. *Billboard:* No. 10
U.S. RIAA certification: Platinum
Producer: Peter Collins and Rush

Side 1: 1. The Big Money 5:36; 2. Grand Designs 5:05; 3. Manhattan Project 5:05; 4. Marathon 6:09
Side 2: 1. Territories 6:19; 2. Middletown Dreams 5:17; 3. Emotion Detector 5:10; 4. Mystic Rhythms 6:08
Note: First Rush album to be issued on CD as a new release.

Hold Your Fire
Label: Mercury
Catalog No.: 832 464-1
Release date: September 8, 1987
Peak U.S. *Billboard:* No. 13
U.S. RIAA certification: Gold
Producer: Peter Collins and Rush

Side 1: 1. Force Ten 4:28; 2. Time Stand Still 5:07; 3. Open Secrets 5:37; 4. Second Nature 4:35; 5. Prime Mover 5:19
Side 2: 1. Lock and Key 5:08; 2. Mission 5:15; 3. Turn the Page 4:53; 4. Tai Shan 4:14; 5. High Water 5:32

Presto
Label: Atlantic
Catalog No.: 82040-1
Release date: November 21, 1989
Peak U.S. *Billboard:* No. 16
U.S. RIAA certification: Gold
Producer: Rupert Hine and Rush

Side 1: 1. Show Don't Tell 5:01; 2. Chain Lightning 4:33; 3. The Pass 4:51; 4. War Paint 5:24; 5. Scars 4:07; 6. Presto 5:45
Side 2: 1. Superconductor 4:47; 2. Anagram (For Mongo) 4:00; 3. Red Tide 4:29; 4. Hand Over Fist 4:11; 5. Available Light 5:03
Note: First album under Rush's new U.S. deal with Atlantic, all previous albums being with Mercury. Also last album of the vinyl era. Only Rush album issued on vinyl in Uruguay. Original CD issue was in longbox format.

Roll the Bones
Label: Atlantic
Catalog No.: 82293-2
Release date: September 3, 1991
Peak U.S. *Billboard:* No. 3
U.S. RIAA certification: Platinum
Producer: Rupert Hine and Rush

1. Dreamline 4:38; 2. Bravado 4:35, 3. Roll the Bones 5:30; 4. Face Up 3:54; 5. Where's My Thing? (Part IV, Gangster of Boats Trilogy) 3:49; 6. The Big Wheel 5:13; 7. Heresy 5:26; 8. Ghost of a Chance 5:19; 9. Neurotica 4:40; 10. You Bet Your Life 5:00
Note: Issued on vinyl in some overseas territories.

Counterparts
Label: Atlantic
Catalog No.: 7 82528-2
Release date: October 19, 1993
Peak U.S. *Billboard:* No. 2
U.S. RIAA certification: Gold
Producer: Peter Collins and Rush

1. Animate 6:04; 2. Stick It Out 4:30; 3. Cut to the Chase 4:47; 4. Nobody's Hero 4:59; 5. Between Sun & Moon 4:39; 6. Alien Shore 5:46; 7. The Speed of Love 5:01; 8. Double Agent 4:51; 9. Leave That Thing Alone 4:06; 10. Cold Fire 4:29; 11. Everyday Glory 5:11
Note: Issued on vinyl in some overseas territories.

Test for Echo
Label: Atlantic
Catalog No.: 7 82925-2
Release date: September 10, 1996
Peak U.S. *Billboard:* No. 5
U.S. RIAA certification: Gold
Producer: Peter Collins and Rush

1. Test For Echo 5:56; 2. Driven 4:27; 3. Half the World 3:41; 4. The Color of Right 4:48; 5. Time and Motion 5:04; 6. Totem 5:00; 7. Dog Years 4:56; 8. Virtuality 5:43; 9. Resist 4:22; 10. Limbo 5:28; 11. Carve Away the Stone 4:05
Note: Last Rush album issued in the United States on cassette.

Vapor Trails
Label: Atlantic
Catalog No.: 83531-2
Release date: May 14, 2002
Peak U.S. *Billboard:* No. 6
U.S. RIAA certification: n/a
Producer: Rush and Paul Northfield

1. One Little Victory 5:08; 2. Ceiling Unlimited 5:28; 3. Ghost Rider 5:41; 4. Peaceable Kingdom 5:23; 5. The Stars Look Down 4:28; 6. How It Is 4:05; 7. Vapor Trail 4:57; 8. Secret Touch 6:34; 9. Earthshine 5:38; 10. Sweet Miracle 3:40; 11. Nocturne 4:49; 12. Freeze—Part IV of Fear 6:21; 13. Out of the Cradle 5:03
Note: Also issued in the United States as a double LP album (83531-1) and overseas as a cassette (83531-4).

Snakes & Arrows
Label: Atlantic
Catalog No.: 135484-2
Release date: May 1, 2007
Peak U.S. *Billboard:* No. 3
U.S. RIAA certification: n/a
Producer: Nick Raskulinecz and Rush

1. Far Cry 5:21; 2. Armor and Sword 6:36; 3. Workin' Them Angels 4:47; 4. The Larger Bowl (A Pantoum) 4:07; 5. Spindrift 5:24; 6. The Main Monkey Business 6:01; 7. The Way the Wind Blows 6:28; 8. Hope 2:03; 9. Faithless 5:31; 10. Bravest Face 5:12; 11. Good News First 4:51; 12. Malignant Narcissism 2:17; 13. We Hold On 4:13
Note: Also issued in a Walmart bonus edition and on vinyl as a double album (79980-1).

Clockwork Angels
Label: Roadrunner
Catalog No.: 1686-176562
Release date: June 12, 2012
Peak U.S. *Billboard:* No. 2
U.S. RIAA certification: n/a
Producer: Rush, Nick Raskulinecz

1. Caravan 5:40; 2. BU2B 5:10; 3. Clockwork Angels 7:31; 4. The Anarchist 6:52; 5. Carnies 4:52; 6. Halo Effect 3:14; 7. Seven Cities of Gold 6:32; 8. The Wreckers 5:01; 9. Headlong Flight 7:20; 10. BU2B2 1:28; 11. Wish Them Well 5:25; 12. The Garden 6:59
Note: Also issued on double LP in the United States (1686-17656-1) and as a *Classic Rock* magazine "fanpack" issue, featuring 132-page magazine and full CD.

Live Albums

All The World's a Stage
Label: Mercury
Catalog No.: SRM-2-7508
Release date: September 29, 1976
Peak U.S. *Billboard:* No. 40
U.S. RIAA certification: Platinum

Side 1: 1. Bastille Day; 2. Anthem; 3. Fly by Night; 4. In the Mood; 5. Something for Nothing
Side 2: 1. Lakeside Park; 2. 2112
Side 3: 1. By-Tor & the Snow Dog; 2. In the End
Side 4: 1. Working Man; 2. Finding My Way; 3. What You're Doing
Note: "What You're Doing" was omitted for the CD reissue.

Exit . . . Stage Left
Label: Mercury
Catalog No.: SRM-2-7001
Release date: October 29, 1981
Peak U.S. *Billboard:* No. 10
U.S. RIAA certification: Platinum

Side 1: 1. The Spirit of Radio; 2. Red Barchetta; 3. YYZ
Side 2: 1. A Passage to Bangkok; 2. Closer to the Heart; 3. Beneath, Between & Behind; 4. Jacob's Ladder
Side 3: 1. Broon's Bane; 2. The Trees; 3. Xanadu
Side 4: 1. Free Will; 2. Tom Sawyer; 3. La Villa Strangiato
Note: "A Passage to Bangkok" was omitted from CD reissue.

A Show of Hands
Label: Mercury
Catalog No.: 836 346-1
Release date: January 10, 1989
Peak U.S. *Billboard:* No. 21
U.S. RIAA certification: Gold

Side 1: 1. The Big Money; 2. Subdivisions; 3. Marathon
Side 2: 1. Turn the Page; 2. Manhattan Project; 3. Mission
Side 3: 1. Distant Early Warning; 2. Mystic Rhythms; 3. Witch Hunt—Part III of Fear
Side 4: 1. Force Ten; 2. Time Stand Still; 3. Red Sector A; 4. Closer to the Heart
Note: Only Rush album issued on vinyl in Yugoslavia.

Different Stages
Label: Atlantic
Catalog No. : 83122-2
Release date: November 10, 1998
Peak U.S. *Billboard:* No. 35
U.S. RIAA certification: Gold

CD1: 1. Dreamline; 2. Limelight; 3. Driven; 4. Bravado; 5. Animate; 6. Show Don't Tell; 7. The Trees; 8. Nobody's Hero; 9. Closer to the Heart; 10. 2112
CD2: 1. Test for Echo; 2. The Analog Kid; 3. Freewill; 4. Roll the Bones; 5. Stick It Out; 6. Resist; 7. Leave That Thing Alone; 8. The Rhythm Method; 9. Natural Science; 10. Force Ten; 11. The Spirit of Radio; 12. Tom Sawyer; 13. YYZ
CD3: 1. Bastille Day; 2. By-Tor & the Snow Dog; 3. Xanadu; 4. A Farewell to Kings; 5. Something for Nothing; 6. Cygnus X-1; 7. Anthem; 8. Working Man; 9. Fly by Night; 10. In the Mood; 11. Cinderella Man

Rush in Rio
Label: Atlantic
Catalog No.: 83672-2
Release date: October 21, 2003
Peak U.S. *Billboard:* No. 33
U.S. RIAA certification: Gold

CD1: 1. Tom Sawyer; 2. Distant Early Warning; 3. New World Man; 4. Roll the Bones; 5. Earthshine; 6. YYZ; 7. The Pass; 8. Bravado; 9. The Big Money; 10. The Trees; 11. Free Will; 12. Closer to the Heart; 13. Natural Science;
CD2: 1. One Little Victory; 2. Driven; 3. Ghost Rider; 4. Secret Touch; 5. Dreamline; 6. Red Sector A; 7. Leave That Thing Alone; 8. O Baterista; 9. Resist; 10. 2112
CD3: 1. Limelight; 2. La Villa Strangiato; 3. The Spirit of Radio; 4. By-Tor & the Snow Dog; 5. Cygnus X-1; 6. Working Man; 7. Between Sun & Moon; 8. Vital Signs

Snakes & Arrows Live
Label: Atlantic
Catalog No.: 442620-2
Release date: April 15, 2008
Peak U.S. *Billboard:* No. 18
U.S. RIAA certification: n/a

CD1: 1. Limelight; 2. Digital Man; 3. Entre Nous; 4. Mission; 5. Freewill; 6. The Main Monkey Business; 7. The Larger Bowl; 8. Secret Touch; 9. Circumstances; 10. Between the Wheels; 11. Dreamline; 12. Far Cry; 13. Workin' Them Angels; 14. Armor and Sword
CD2: 1. Spindrift; 2. The Way the Wind Blows; 3. Subdivisions; 4. Natural Science; 5. Witch Hunt; 6. Malignant Narcissism—De Slagwerker; 7. Hope; 8. Distant Early Warning; 9. The Spirit of Radio; 10. Tom Sawyer; 11. One Little Victory; 12. A Passage to Bangkok; 13. YYZ

Grace Under Pressure 1984 Tour
Label: Mercury
Catalog No.: 001325202
Release date: August 11, 2009
Peak U.S. *Billboard:* n/a
U.S. RIAA certification: n/a

1. Intro; 2. The Spirit of Radio; 3. The Enemy Within; 4. The Weapon; 5. Witch Hunt; 6. New World Man; 7. Distant Early Warning; 8. Red Sector A; 9. Closer to the Heart; 10. YYZ/2112—The Temples of Syrinx/Tom Sawyer; 11. Vital Signs; 12. Finding My Way/In the Mood
Note: Reissue of audio CD that first appeared in the *Replay X 3* package.

Moving Pictures: Live 2011
Label: Roadrunner
Catalog No.: 016861766016
Release date: November 8, 2011
Peak U.S. *Billboard:* n/a
U.S. RIAA certification: n/a

1. Tom Sawyer; 2. Red Barchetta; 3. YYZ; 4. Limelight; 5. The Camera Eye; 6. With Hunt—Part III of Fear; 7. Vital Signs
Note: Released digitally and on vinyl only.

Time Machine: Live in Cleveland 2011
Label: Roadrunner
Catalog No.: 1686-176655
Release date: November 8, 2011
Peak U .S. *Billboard:* n/a
U.S. RIAA certification: n/a

CD1: 1. The Spirit of Radio; 2. Time Stand Still; 3. Presto; 4. Stick It Out; 5. Workin' Them Angels; 6. Leave That Thing Alone; 7. Faithless; 8. BU2B; 9. Free Will; 10. Marathon; 11. Subdivisions; 12. Tom Sawyer; 13. Red Barchetta; 14. YYZ; 15. Limelight
CD2: 1. The Camera Eye; 2. Witch Hunt; 3. Vital Signs; 4. Caravan; 5. Moto Perpetuo (Featuring Love For Sale); 6. O'Malley's Break; 7. Closer to the Heart; 8. 2112 Overture/ The Temples of Syrinx; 9. Far Cry; 10. La Villa Strangiato; 11. Working Man

Clockwork Angels Tour
Label: Roadrunner
Catalog No.: 1686-175982
Release date: November 19, 2013
Peak U.S. *Billboard*: n/a
U.S. RIAA certification: n/a

CD1: 1. Subdivisions; 2. The Big Money; 3. Force Ten; 4. Grand Designs; 5. The Body Electric; 6. Territories; 7. The Analog Kid; 8. Bravado; 9. Where's My Thing?/Here It Is! (drum solo); 10. Far Cry
CD2: 1. Caravan; 2. Clockwork Angels; 3. The Anarchist; 4. Carnies; 5. The Wreckers; 6. Headlong Flight/Drumbastica (drum solo); 7. Peke's Repose (guitar solo)/Halo Effect; 8. Seven Cities of Gold; 9. Wish Them Well; 10. The Garden
CD3: 1. Dreamline; 2. The Percussor (I) Binary Love Theme (II) Steambanger's Ball (drum solo); 3. Red Sector A; 4. YYZ 5. The Spirit of Radio; 6. Tom Sawyer; 7. 2112; 8. Limelight (soundcheck recording); 9. Middletown Dreams; 10. The Pass; 11. Manhattan Project
Note: Approximately half the album features band performances augmented by the Clockwork Angels String Ensemble.

Selected Compilations

Archives
Label: Mercury
Catalog No.: SRM-3-9200
Release date: April, 1978
Peak U.S. *Billboard:* No. 121
U.S. RIAA certification: Platinum

Archives is a straightforward repackaging of the first three Rush albums.
Note: U.S. issue with gray cover; Canadian issues in gray and black covers. Foremost non-U.S. compilation is called *Rush Through Time*, an eleven-track package covering the debut through *Moving Pictures*, issued in the Netherlands.

Chronicles
Label: Mercury
Catalog No.: P2 38936
Release date: September 4, 1990
Peak U.S. *Billboard:* No. 51
U.S. RIAA certification: 2 x Platinum
CD1: 1. Finding My Way; 2. Working Man; 3. Fly by Night; 4. Anthem; 5. Bastille Day; 6. Lakeside Park; 7. 2112: (a) Overture (b) The Temples of Syrinx; 8. What You're Doing (live); 9. A Farewell to Kings; 10. Closer to the Heart; 11. The Trees; 12. La Villa Strangiato; 13. Freewill; 14. The Spirit of Radio
CD2: 1. Tom Sawyer; 2. Red Barchetta; 3. Limelight; 4. A Passage to Bangkok (live); 5. Subdivisions; 6. New World Man; 7. Distant Early Warning; 8. Red Sector A; 9. The Big Money; 10. Manhattan Project; 11. Force Ten; 12. Time Stand Still; 13. Mystic Rhythms (live); 14. Show Don't Tell

Retrospective I: 1974–1980
Label: Mercury
Catalog No.: 314 534 909-2
Release date: May 6, 1997
Peak U.S. *Billboard:* n/a
U.S. RIAA certification: n/a

1. The Spirit of Radio; 2. The Trees; 3. Something for Nothing; 4. Freewill; 5. Xanadu; 6. Bastille Day; 7. By-Tor & the Snow Dog; 8. Anthem; 9. Closer to the Heart; 10. 2112 Overture; 11. The Temples of Syrinx; 12. La Villa Strangiato; 13. Fly by Night; 14. Finding My Way

Retrospective II: 1980–1987
Label: Mercury
Catalog #: 314 534 910-2
Release date: June 3, 1997
Peak U.S. *Billboard:* n/a
U.S. RIAA certification: n/a

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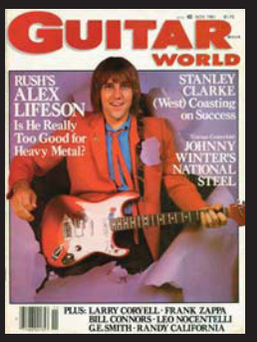
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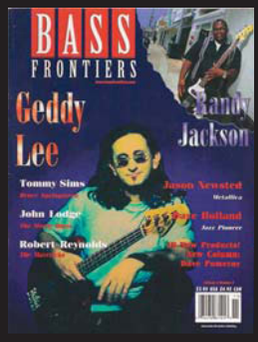
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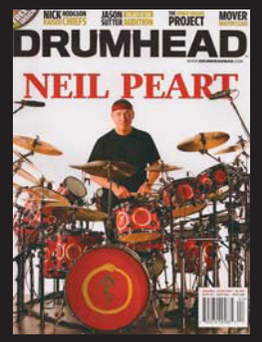
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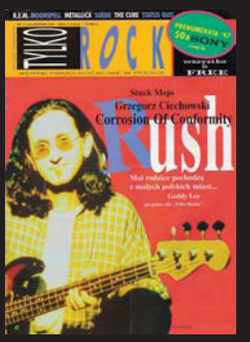
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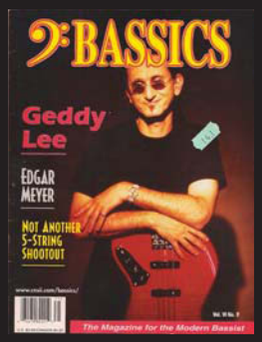
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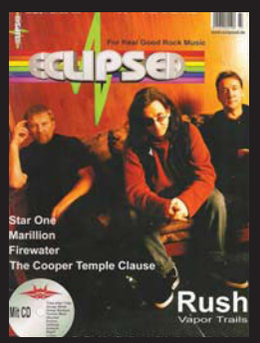
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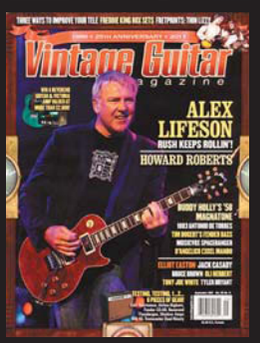
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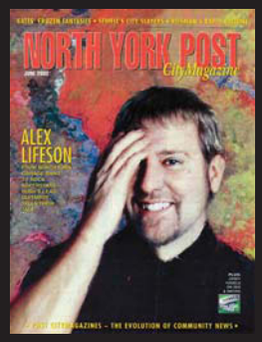
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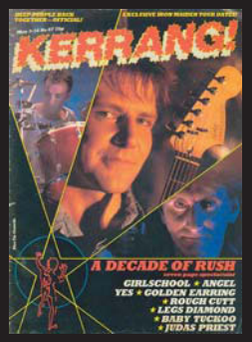
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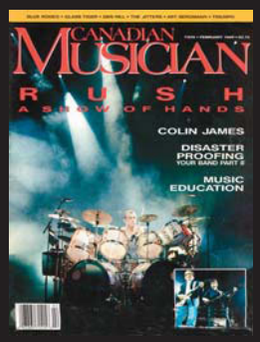
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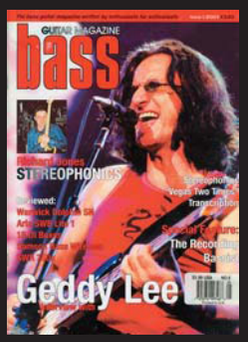
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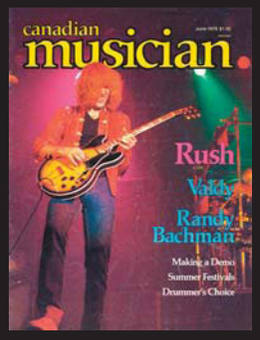
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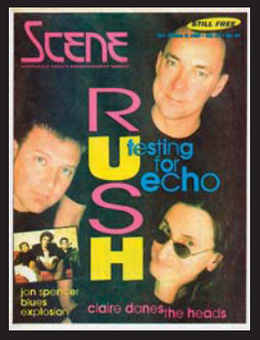
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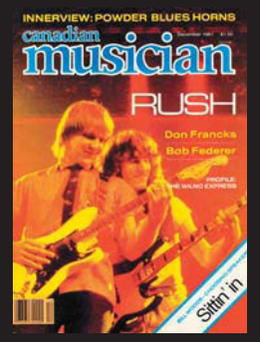
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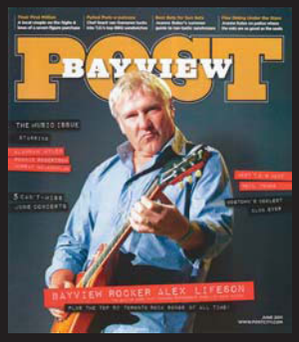
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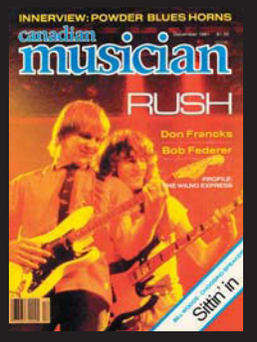
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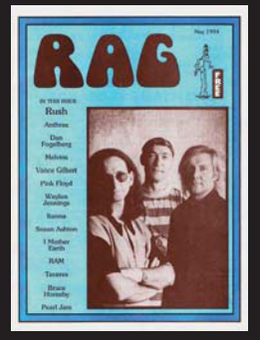
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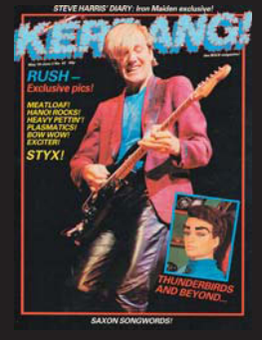
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PRONG · BEST MESS WINNERS!

1. The Big Money; 2. Red Barchetta; 3. Subdivisions; 4. Time Stand Still; 5. Mystic Rhythms; 6. The Analog Kid; 7. Distant Early Warning; 8. Marathon; 9. The Body Electric; 10. Mission; 11. Limelight; 12. Red Sector A; 13. New World Man; 14. Tom Sawyer; 15. Force Ten

The Spirit of Radio: Greatest Hits 1974–1987
Label: Mercury
Catalog No.: 440 063 335-2
Release date: February 11, 2003
Peak U.S. *Billboard:* No. 167
U.S. RIAA certification: Gold

1. Working Man; 2. Fly by Night; 3. 2112 Overture/The Temples of Syrinx; 4. Closer to the Heart; 5. The Trees; 6. The Spirit of Radio; 7. Freewill; 8. Limelight; 9. Tom Sawyer; 10. Red Barchetta; 11. New World Man; 12. Subdivisions; 13. Distant Early Warning; 14. The Big Money; 15. Force Ten; 16. Time Stand Still
Note: A limited edition of this compilation included "Mystic Rhythms" as a bonus track, plus DVD versions of "Closer to the Heart," "Tom Sawyer," "Subdivisions," and "The Big Money." Also included were the lyrics to each of the sixteen audio tracks.

Gold
Label: Mercury
Catalog No.: B0006322-02
Release date: April 25, 2006
Peak U.S. *Billboard:* n/a
U.S. RIAA certification: n/a

Note: *Gold* is essentially a repackage of *Retrospective I* and *Retrospective II*, swapping out "Something For Nothing" for "Working Man."

Retrospective III: 1989–2008
Label: Atlantic
Catalog No.: 515813-2
Release date: March 3, 2009
Peak U.S. *Billboard:* No. 160
U.S. RIAA certification: n/a

1. One Little Victory (remix); 2. Dreamline; 3. Workin' Them Angels; 4. Presto; 5. Bravado; 6. Driven; 7. The Pass; 8. Animate; 9. Roll the Bones; 10. Ghost of a Chance (live); 11. Nobody's Hero; 12. Leave That Thing Alone; 13. Earthshine (remix); 14. Far Cry
A deluxe version was also issued, which included a DVD. Tracks are 1. Stick It Out; 2. Nobody's Hero; 3. Half the World; 4. Driven; 5. Roll the Bones; 6. Show Don't Tell; 7. The Pass; 8. Superconductor; 9. Far Cry; 10. Malignant Narcissism; 11. The Seeker (live); 12. Secret Touch; 13. Resist (live); plus a bonus interview and "Tom Sawyer" live.

Working Men
Label: Atlantic
Catalog No.: 7567895641
Release date: November 17, 2009
Peak U.S. *Billboard:* n/a
U.S. RIAA certification: n/a

1. Limelight; 2. The Spirit of Radio; 3. 2112; 4. Freewill; 5. Dreamline; 6. Far Cry; 7. Subdivisions; 8. One Little Victory; 9. Closer to the Heart; 10. Tom Sawyer; 11. Working Man; 12. YYZ
Note: *Working Men* was issued in CD and DVD formats and is essentially a compilation culled from *Rush in Rio, R30,* and *Snakes & Arrows Live*. Only "One Little Victory" is previously unreleased.

The Studio Albums 1989–2007
Label: Atlantic/Rhino
Catalog No.: 8122796508-1/2/3/4/5/6/7
Release date: October 1, 2013
Peak U.S. *Billboard*: n/a
U.S. RIAA certification: n/a
Note: A CD box set consisting of the albums *Presto, Roll the Bones, Counterparts, Test for Echo, Vapor Trails Remixed, Feedback*, and *Snakes & Arrows*.

Selected Singles

Singles is perhaps the department where it most bears reminding that this is a U.S. discography. Having said that, we're starting with a Canadian one! Frankly, the singles story for Rush is pretty dull, given the complete lack of non-LP (studio) tracks from the lads. So, yeah, the debut single—two non-LP tracks, but Canadian—is a major discography item, and then after that it gets pretty workmanlike.
A further note: For the vinyl era, I've included all commercial U.S. releases, but only select promos, as some of the promos are slight variations upon each other or slight variations on the official release (beginning with same catalog number). "PS" denotes picture sleeve. Once we get into the CD age, it switches over to promos exclusively, as the commercial CD single format in North America was rarely exploited (and not at all by Rush), versus, say, the U.K. and the EU with their slim-line EPs. I think it was still a useful exercise, however, because it demonstrates the tracks that were being pushed at radio. Again, I've excluded a few that seemed repetitious or in the slight variation category, as well as CDRs.

7-Inch Vinyl Singles

Not Fade Away/You Can't Fight It (Moon, MN 001)
Finding My Way/Finding My Way (DJ 407) promo
Finding My Way (edit)/Need Some Love (73623)
In the Mood/In the Mood (DJ 417) promo
In the Mood/What You're Doing (73647)
Fly by Night/Anthem (73681)
Lakeside Park/Bastille Day (73737)
The Twilight Zone/Lessons (73803)
Fly by Night—In The Mood (live)/Something for Nothing (live) (73873)
The Temples of Syrinx/Making Memories (73912)
Closer to the Heart/Madrigal (73958)
Fly by Night/Fly by Night (DJ 553) promo; promoting the *Archives* album
Fly by Night/Anthem (73990); promoting the *Archives* album
The Trees/The Trees (74051) promo
The Trees/Circumstances (74051)
The Spirit of Radio/The Spirit of Radio (76044) promo
The Spirit of Radio/Circumstances (76044)
Entre Nous/Entre Nous (76060) promo
Entre Nous/Different Strings (76060)
Limelight/Limelight (76095 DJ) promo
Limelight/YYZ (76095)
Tom Sawyer/Tom Sawyer (76109) promo
Tom Sawyer/Witch Hunt (76109) PS
Closer to the Heart (live) /Closer to the Heart (76124 DJ) promo
Closer to the Heart (live)/Freewill (76124)
New World Man/New World Man (76179 DJ) promo; brown vinyl, PS
New World Man/New World Man (76179 DJ) promo; PS
New World Man/Vital Signs (live) (76179) PS
Subdivision/Subdivisions (76196) promo
Subdivisions/Countdown (76196)
Red Sector A/Red Sector A (PRO 319 7) promo; red vinyl
The Body Electric/Body Electric (880 050 7 DJ) promo
The Body Electric/Between the Wheels (880 050 7)
The Big Money/The Big Money (PRO 383 7 DJ) promo
The Big Money/Red Sector A (live) (884 191 7) PS
Mystic Rhythms/Emotion Detector (884 520 7)
Time Stand Still/Time Stand Still (888 891 7 DJ) promo
Time Stand Still/High Water (888 891 7) PS
Caravan/BU2B (527398-7) limited edition; white vinyl

12-Inch Vinyl Singles, EPs, LPs (all promo)

Mercury In-Store Play Special (MK-8) PS
Everything Your Listeners Ever Wanted to Hear by Rush . . . But You Were Afraid to Play (MK-32) PS
The Trees/Prelude, Circumstances (MK-75) PS
The Spirit of Radio/The Trees, Working Man (MK-125)
Entre Nous (edit) (MK-137) PS
Rush N' Roulette (MK-185) PS
A Passage to Bangkok/Freewill (MK-188) PS
New World Man/Vital Signs (live) (MK-216) clear vinyl
Distant Early Warning/Between the Wheels (PRO 276-1)
The Body Electric (PRO 290-1)
Red Sector A (edit)/The Enemy Within (PRO 320-1) red vinyl
The Big Money (PRO 382-1)
Mystic Rhythms (PRO 400-1)
Force Ten (PRO 532-1)
Marathon (live) (PRO 689-1)

Cassette Singles

The Pass/Presto (4-87986)
Ghost of a Chance/Where's My Thing?, interview (4-87498)
Nobody's Hero/Stick It Out (4-87267)

CD Singles

Time Stand Still, Time Stand Still (edit) (CDP 05)
Show Don't Tell (PR 3082 2)
Show Don't Tell (edit), Show Don't Tell (PR 3125 2)
The Pass (edit), The Pass (PR 316 2)
The Pass (PR 3175 2)
Profiled! (PRCD 3200-2) 55-minute interview
Superconductor (PRCD 3331)
Dreamline (PRCD 4120 2)
Where's My Thing? (PRCD 4126 2)
Roll the Bones (PRCD 4260 2)
Ghost of a Chance (edit), Ghost of a Chance (PRCD 4458 2)
Bravado (PRCD 4580 2)
Stick It Out (PRCD 5314 2)
Nobody's Hero (PRCD 5430 2)
Double Agent (PRCD 5431 2)
Nobody's Hero (edit) (PRCD 5497 2)
Test for Echo (PRCD 6853 2)
Test for Echo (edit), Test for Echo (PRCD 6885 2)
Half the World (PRCD 6930 2)
Driven (PRCD 8009)
Virtuality (edit), Virtuality (PRCD 8139)
Spirit of Radio, 2112 (PRCD 8690)
Closer to the Heart (PRCD 8804)
One Little Victory (PRCD 300749-2)
Secret Touch (PRCD 300863)
One Little Victory, Earthshine (PRCD 300857)
Sweet Miracle (PRCD 300930)
Rush in Rio Sampler (PRCD 301227) digipak
Resist (acoustic) (P1Z0E 1279P)
Summertime Blues (PRCD 301512)
Tom Sawyer, R30 Overture, Working Man (011431082-9 PSI-01)
Far Cry (edit), Far Cry (PRCD 133692)
Spindrift (edit), Spindrift (PRCD 260476)
The Larger Bowl (PRCD 294844)
Workin' Them Angels (edit), Workin' Them Angels (live), Workin' Them Angels (PRCD 454780)
Headlong Flight (PRO16967)
The Wreckers (PRO16978)

Videography

Exit . . . Stage Left
Label: Polygram
Catalog No.: PMV 60285
Release date: 1981
U.S. RIAA certification: Gold

1. Limelight; 2. Tom Sawyer; 3. The Trees; 4. Xanadu; 5. Red Barchetta; 6. Freewill; 7. Closer to the Heart; 8. YYZ; 9. Medley: By-Tor & the Snow Dog, In the End, In the Mood, 2112
Note: Originally issued on Beta, VHS, and laserdisc by RCA/Columbia Home Videos. In 2006, the set was issued in DVD form as part of *Replay X 3*, followed by a stand-alone release in 2007. Recorded March 27, 1981, in Montreal. Almost entirely different performances from the *Exit . . . Stage Left* live album.

Through the Camera Eye
Label: Polygram
Catalog No.: PMV 60466
Release date: 1985
U.S. RIAA certification: n/a

1. Distant Early Warning; 2. Vital Signs; 3. The Body Electric; 4. Afterimage; 5. Subdivisions; 6. Tom Sawyer (live); 7. The Enemy Within; 8. Countdown
Note: This 44-minute video collection was originally issued on VHS and laserdisc (PMV PA-85-112) by RCA/Columbia Home Videos. In 2006, the set was issued in DVD form as part of *Replay X 3*, followed by a stand-alone release in 2007.

Grace Under Pressure Tour
Label: Polygram
Catalog No.: PMV 60607
Release date: 1986
U.S. RIAA certification: n/a

1. The Spirit of Radio; 2. The Enemy Within; 3. The Weapon; 4. Witch Hunt; 5. New World Man; 6. Distant Early Warning; 7. Red Sector A; 8. Closer to the Heart; 9. YYZ; 10. The Temples of Syrinx; 11. Tom Sawyer; 12. Vital Signs; 13. Finding My Way; 14. In the Mood; 15. Bonus: The Big Money (production video)
Note: This 69-minute video is culled from a concert at Maple Leaf Gardens, Toronto, September 21, 1984. It was originally issued on VHS and laserdisc (CDV 080 103-1) by RCA/Columbia Home Videos. In 2006, the set was issued in DVD form as part of *Replay X 3*, followed by a stand-alone release in 2007. An audio version was also included in the *Replay X 3* package and then issued as a stand-alone CD in 2009.

A Show of Hands
Label: Polygram
Catalog No.: PMV 041 760-3
Release date: 1989
U.S. RIAA certification: Platinum

1. The Big Money; 2. Marathon; 3. Turn the Page; 4. Prime Mover; 5. Manhattan Project; 6. Closer to the Heart; 7. Red Sector A; 8. Force Ten; 9. Mission; 10. Territories; 11. The Rhythm Method; 12. The Spirit of Radio; 13. Tom Sawyer; 14. 2112/La Villa Strangiato/In the Mood
Note: This ninety-minute video is culled from a concert at the National Exhibition Centre, Birmingham, U.K. It was originally issued on VHS and laserdisc (PMV 082 575-1) by Polygram. In 2006, the set was issued in DVD form as part of *Replay X 3*, followed by a stand-alone release in 2007.

Chronicles
Label: Polygram
Catalog No.: PMV 082 765-3
Release date: 1990
U.S. RIAA certification: Platinum

1. Closer to the Heart; 2. The Trees; 3. Limelight; 4. Tom Sawyer (live); 5. Red Barchetta (live); 6. Subdivisions; 7. Distant Early Warning; 8. Red Sector A (live); 9. The Big Money; 10. Mystic Rhythms; 11. Time Stand Still; 12. Lock And Key
Note: Also issued on laserdisc (CDV 082 765-1) at the same time and on DVD (827659) in May 2001. Running time: 63

minutes. The DVD version includes two extra tracks: "The Enemy Within" and "Afterimage." The laserdisc omits "Red Sector A."

Rush in Rio
Label: Rounder
Catalog No.: 66825 1099 9
Release date: October 21, 2003
U.S. RIAA certification: 7 x Platinum

Track list is the same as CD issue except DVD omits "Between Sun & Moon" and "Vital Signs" while adding ***The Documentary: The Boys in Brazil,*** a film by Andrew MacNaughtan, MX Multiangle of "YYZ," "O Baterista," and "La Villa Strangiato" plus Easter Eggs ("By-Tor" movie and "Anthem").

R30: 30th Anniversary World Tour
Label: Rounder
Catalog No.: 01143-1083-9
Release date: November 22, 2005
U.S. RIAA certification: 5 x Platinum

DVD1: 1. R30 Overture: Finding My Way/Anthem/Bastille Day/A Passage to Bangkok/Cygnus X-1/Hemisphere; 2. The Spirit of Radio; 3. Force Ten; 4. Animate; 5. Subdivisions; 6. Earthshine; 7. Red Barchetta; 8. Roll the Bones; 9. The Seeker; 10. Tom Sawyer; 11. Dreamline; 12. Between the Wheels; 13. Mystic Rhythms; 14. Der Trommler; 15. Resist; 16. Heart Full of Soul; 17. 2112/Xanadu/Working Man; 18. Summertime Blues; 19. Crossroads; 20. Limelight
DVD2: Interviews 1. 1979: Hamilton, Ivor Wynne Stadium; 2. 1981: Le Studio, Quebec; 3. 1990: Artist of the Decade Interviews; 4. 1994: Juno Hall of Fame Induction; 5. 2002: Vapor Trails Tour Interview
The Anthem Vault: 6. Fly by Night; 7. Finding My Way (mpeg1 from Rock Concert); 8. In the Mood (mpeg1 from Rock Concert); 9. Circumstances; 10. La Villa Strangiato; 11. A Farewell to Kings; 12. Xanadu; 13. The Spirit of Radio; (soundcheck, 1979, Ivor Wynne Stadium); 14. Freewill (from Toronto Rocks, 2003) 15. Closer to the Heart (from Canada for Asia, 2005)
CD1, 2: Same track list as DVD1
Note: Issued four years later in Blu-ray (01143-1132-9).

Replay X 3
Label: Mercury
Catalog No.: B0006649-50
Release date: June 13, 2006
U.S. RIAA certification: 2 x Platinum

Replay X 3 is a repackage of the concert videos *Exit . . . Stage Left, Grace Under Pressure Tour,* and *A Show of Hands,* presented with a 5.1 surround sound remix. Also included is an audio version of the *Grace Under Pressure* set. A limited edition of *Replay X 3* sold exclusively by Best Buy contained four bonus audio tracks, added to the *Grace Under Pressure Tour* audio CD: "Limelight," "Closer to the Heart," "The Spirit of Radio," and "Tom Sawyer."

Snakes & Arrows Live
Label: Rounder
Catalog No.: 01143-1124-9
Release date: November 24, 2008
U.S. RIAA certification: 5 x Platinum

Track list is the same as CD issue with additions. On DVD1: What's That Smell, featuring Jerry Stiller; 2007 Tour Outtakes; What's That Smell outtakes; Far Cry—Alternate Cut featuring Rear Screen Footage; The Way the Wind Blows—Alternate Cut featuring Rear Screen Footage; Red Sector A from the R30 tour. On DVD3: Oh, Atlanta! The Authorized Bootlegs; Ghost of a Chance; Red Barchetta; The Trees; 2112/The Temples of Syrinx.

Working Men
Label: Rounder
Catalog No.: 01143-1135-9
Release date: November 17, 2009
U.S. RIAA certification: n/a

Note: Track list same as CD version.

Time Machine: Live in Cleveland 2011
Label: Roadrunner
Catalog No.: 01143-1156-9
Release date: November 8, 2011
U.S. RIAA certification: n/a

Track list is the same as CD version, but with the following bonus material: 1. Outtakes from History of Rush, Episodes 2 & 17; 2. Tom Sawyer, featuring the cast of *History of Rush,* Episode 17; 3. Need Some Love live from Laura Secord Secondary School; 4. Anthem live from Passaic, New Jersey.

Clockwork Angels Tour
Label: Anthem/Zöe Vision
Catalog No.: 01143-1153-9
Release date: November 19, 2013
U.S. RIAA certification: n/a

Same track listing as the CD version but with substantial non-concert DVD/Blu-ray bonus material. Various formats.

R40
Label: Anthem/Zöe Vision
Catalog No.: 01143-36186-0901/2/3/4/5/6 (Blu-ray)
Release date: November 10, 2014
U.S. RIAA certification: n/a

A ten DVD or six Blu-ray, plus completist disc, compilation; includes substantial bonus material.

Selected Solo Albums

Victor—***Victor***
Label: Atlantic
Catalog No.: 82852-2
Release date: January 9, 1996
Peak U.S. *Billboard:* No. 99
U.S. RIAA certification: n/a
Producer: Alex Lifeson

1. Don't Care 4:04; 2. Promise 5:44; 3. Start Today 3:48; 4. Mr. X 2:21; 5. At the End 6:07; 6. Sending Out a Warning 4:11; 7. Shut Up Shuttin' Up 4:02; 8. Strip and Go Naked 3:57; 9. The Big Dance 4:14; 10. Victor 6:25; 11. I Am the Spirit 5:31
Note: Alex Lifeson solo project. Also issued on cassette. This album also generated three CD promo singles.

Geddy Lee—***My Favourite Headache***
Label: Atlantic
Catalog No.: 83384-2
Release date: November 14, 2000
Peak U.S. *Billboard:* No. 52
U.S. RIAA certification: n/a
Producer: Geddy Lee, Ben Mink, David Leonard
1. My Favourite Headache 4:45; 2. The Present Tense 3:25; 3. Window to the World 3:02; 4. Working at Perfekt 5:00;

5. Runaway Train 4:30; 6. The Angels' Share 4:33; 7. Moving to Bohemia 4:25; 8. Home on the Strange 3:46; 9. Slipping 5:06; 10. Still 4:30; 11. Grace to Grace 4:59
Note: Also issued on cassette. This album also generated three CD promo singles.

Miscellaneous

Feedback
Label: Atlantic
Catalog No.: 83728-2
Release date: June 29, 2004
Peak U.S. *Billboard:* No. 19
U.S. RIAA certification: n/a
Producer: David Leonard and Rush

1. Summertime Blues 3:52; 2. Heart Full of Soul 2:52; 3. For What It's Worth 3:30; 4. The Seeker 3:27; 5. Mr. Soul 3:51; 6. Seven and Seven Is 2:53; 7. Shapes of Things 3:16; 8. Crossroads 3:27
Note: This covers EP was also issued in the United States on vinyl (83728-1).

Vapor Trails Remixed
Label: Atlantic/Rhino
Catalog No.: 8122796440
Release date: September 27, 2013
Peak U.S. *Billboard*: No. 35
U.S. RIAA certification: n/a
Note: Same track list as the original *Vapor Trails* album, here presented with new mix by David Bottrill as well as a different album cover; also available on vinyl.

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Rock 'n' Roll Comics was launched in 1989 by Todd Loren to spin illustrated (and unlicensed) biographies of rock stars. Some of these artists were supportive, while others sued. Loren was convinced the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution protected his "illustrated articles," and the California Supreme Court agreed. In June 1992, Loren was found murdered in his San Diego condo. The comics continued for two more years, with Jay Allen Sanford serving as managing editor. Loren's murder remains unsolved.

Jeff Wagner is a longtime musicologist, record collector, and heavy metal geek currently residing in Greensboro, North Carolina. Wagner has worked at Relapse Records, The End Records, and currently at Century Media Records. He has written for print and online magazines such as *Decibel*, *Terrorizer*, and *Noisecreep* and was co-editor of *Metal Maniacs* magazine from 1997 to 2001. He is also the author of acclaimed book *Mean Deviation: Four Decades of Progressive Heavy Metal* (Bazillion Points). His favorite album of all time is Rush's *Moving Pictures*.

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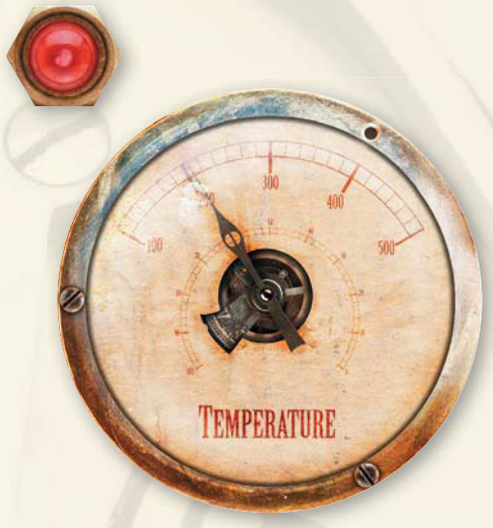

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Acknowledgments

Dennis Pernu, Ray Wawrzyniak, Pete Koza, Pegi Cecconi, Jack David, David Caron, The Banger Boys, Beth and Trevor, and Rush.

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© 2013 Quarto Publishing Group USA Inc.
New Text © 2016 Quarto Publishing Group USA Inc.

First published in 2013 by Voyageur Press, an imprint of Quarto Publishing Group USA Inc., 400 First Avenue North, Suite 400, Minneapolis, MN 55401 USA. This edition published 2016.
Telephone: (612) 344-8100 Fax: (612) 344-8692

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10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

ISBN: 978-0-7603-4995-3

Digital edition published in 2013
eISBN: 978-0-76035-122-2

The Library of Congress has cataloged the hardcover edition of this book as follows:

Popoff, Martin, 1963–
Rush : the illustrated history / by Martin Popoff ; with Richard Bienstock ... [et al.].
p. cm.
ISBN 978-0-7603-4364-7 (hardbound)
1. Rush (Musical group) 2. Rock musicians–Canada–Biography. I. Bienstock, Richard. II. Title.
ML421.R87P66 2013
782.42166092'2–dc22
[B]
2012040525

Acquiring Editor: Dennis Pernu
Project Manager: Sherry Anisi
Art Director: Cindy Samargia Laun
Cover Design: Amelia LeBarron
Book Design: Simon Larkin
Layout: Simon Larkin, Rebecca Pagel

Front cover: *Kevin Winter/Getty Images and Rob Verhorst/Redferns*
Title pages: *Rafa Irusta/www.shutterstock.com*
Table of contents: *A Farewell to Kings* tour, Bakersfield, California, September 26, 1977. *Fin Costello/Redferns/Getty Images*
Rear endpapers: *Greg Olma* (top left), *Dave McDonald* (bottom left), *Trevor Shaikin* (right)

Printed in China

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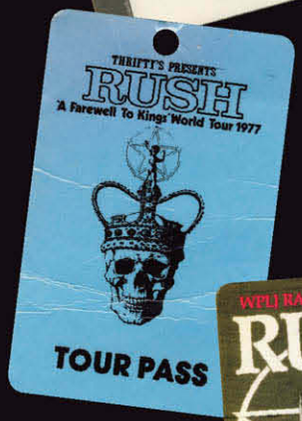
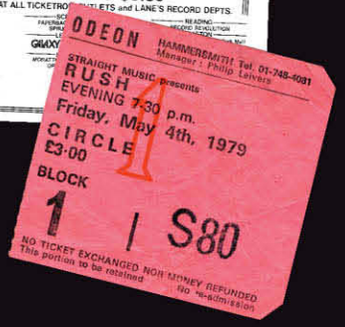
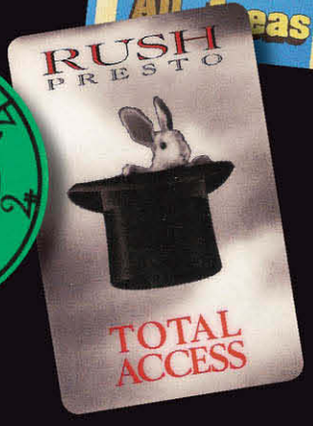


AN EPIC VISUAL CELEBRATION OF RUSH!

In this beautifully designed and illustrated history, prolific rock journalist and noted Rush authority Martin Popoff follows the world-conquering exploits of Geddy Lee, Neil Peart, and Alex Lifeson from the band's formation in Toronto to their fortieth anniversary record release, celebration, and world tour. Popoff's stellar history is complemented by LP reviews from a slate of highly regarded music writers, a thorough discography compiled by the author himself, and more than four hundred photographs and articles of memorabilia, running the gamut from candid backstage images and live performance photography to picture sleeves, gig posters, period print ads, ticket stubs, backstage passes, and more. The result is a visually stunning and authoritative review befitting the rock band with the world's most devoted fans.



MARTIN POPOFF has been described as "the world's most famous heavy metal journalist." He has penned more than fifty books on hard rock, heavy metal, and record collecting and has also worked in film and television, his most recent projects being *Rush: Beyond the Lighted Stage* and *VH1's Metal Evolution*. He lives in Toronto with his wife and son.



Voyageur Press

EAN 9 780760 349953 52499

ISBN: 978-0-7603-4995-3
$24.99 US | £15.99 UK | $29.99 CAN
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